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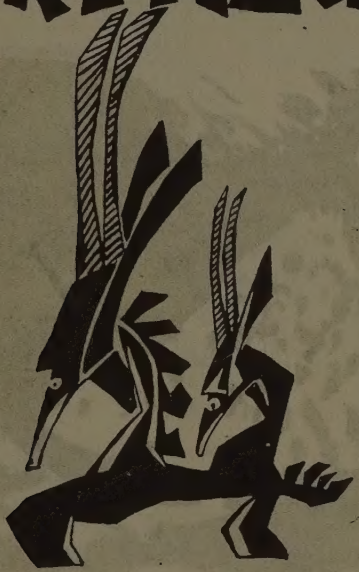

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BAMBARA KNIGHTS

THE VALIANT KNIGHTS KALA N'DJI THIENI AND KALA N'DJI KOROBBA

A BAMBARA TALE RECORDED BY
MALLAM AMADOU HAMPATE BA

What I am about to relate, Sine Koumare told me, is a true account of what took place in the land of Kala, which extends between Sokoto and Sansanding, on the left bank of the Niger. Sassa, Souakou, Sagala, Markadougou, Seribala Tiemedala, etc. are some of the villages in this province celebrated in the history of the Sudan.

It was into Kala country that Toro Koro Mari, the brother of Bna Ali, the Emperor of Segou, retreated to continue the struggle against the Toucouleurs of Ahmadou Cheikou, the King of Segou.

There were in Kala two warriors, two warriors equally brave, brave in every sense of the word. They were generous, utterly without affectations and always making fun which was never malicious.

In the town they would permit a "Bilakoro" (an uncircumcised babe) to tweak their ears and even their beards. They would only laugh till they cried. in sheer indulgence. But as soon as the war drums, the trumpets and the metal bells shouted their confused alarm and when the powder of the assailants sounded eloquently from afar, they became once more their true selves: fearless knights, invincible warriors, scattering all before them in a great wave which mowed down the grass and everything which ventured to appear above ground.

The elder of these warriors was called Kala N'dji Korobba, that is to say. "The eldest of Kala", and the younger Kala N'dji Thieni, which is to say: "The youngest of Kala".

Kala N'dji Thieni had, for his part, the vigour and fearlessness of youth. He had the ambition of one who believed himself born to conquer all that was most precious and most rare upon the earth. He believed that the turtle dove cooed amongst the branches simply to salute his passage . . . And that the bugle bird only opened her beak to chant his praises . . . And that the flowers of the deepest jungle, just as those of the rolling plains, opened their petals only to smile upon him and perfume his path . . . The local people used to say: Kala N'dji Thieni is so brave that every morning he wakens Death from his bed by pulling his tail!

As for Kala N'dji Korobba, he was a master of arms and a matchless marksman. He was also the calmest man in the whole world, a man whose heart could not be moved!

Kala N'dji Thieni had only to see an opponent to measure himself against him, and Kala N'dji Korobba never measured himself against an opponent without making a corpse of him.

Kala N'dji Thieni pounced upon the enemy with the speed of a falcon dropping on a bird. Thus it often happened that he hurled himself upon some

difficult customer who caused him to lose quite a few hairs into the bargain, but without ever succeeding in vanquishing him. As for Kala N'dji Korobba, he was like a lion, trained in the chase. He well knew how to avoid an aggressive leap and how to rebound upon somone wishing to parry his attack. His prudence, however, did not in the least prevent him from being, on the field of battle, a somewhat disdainful "lion", who is wise enough not to give in to impetuosity.

Kala N'dji Korobba : Sakanapat-ti (Good God !) ! He never pointed his gun except to press the trigger and his weapon was never aimed upon someone without spitting out death propelled by a divine fire. The shots fired by Kala N'dji Korobba were invariably applauded by a monstrous echo whose intensity and duration set the monkeys and the squirrels dancing for long afterwards among the tufted tree tops. If Kala N'Dji Korobba saw a man right in front of him he only missed killing him out of pity and also in order that he could put out one of his eyes, thus adding to the number of one eyed men whom the superstitious try to avoid seeing first thing in the morning when they get out of bed.

But be that as it may, there was no-one who did not know him and some even said loudly : "There is not one in all of Kala who would dare to pit himself against Kala N'Dji Korobba, apart only from Kala N'Dji Thieni. He is, after all, the only one who is fit to wear the cast off sandals of Kala N'Dji Korobba".

Such a comparison was not calculated to please Kala N'Dji Korobba ! And so he said one day in public : "If the people of Kala continue much longer to compare me with Kala N'Dji Thieni, that stripling of Kala, popularly known as "The Last Born of Kala," I shall turn him front to back and back to front until there is nothing left of him !" But . . . in spite of this declaration, the heart of Kala N'Dji Korobba continued to be tormented by the voice of the Tempter, urging him in a whisper to cut off Kala N'Dji Thieni in the midst of his days, that little kitten who wanted to play at being a tawny lion.

The friends of Kala N'Dji Thieni, having had wind of the declarations of Kala N'Dji Korobba, informed Kala N'Dji Thieni, so that he might know what the heart of the old lion had in store for him.

Kala N'Dji Thieni said to his friends : "I must thank you for your warning, but be reassured. Kala N'Dji Korobba shall never have my life! On the contrary, let me assure you that though the whole world trembles in the presence of Kala N'Dji Korobba, when I am before him I feel myself only in the presence of a hero whose exploits and paths I wish to imitate and pursue. To be sure, I would be the last to deny that the moustache of Kala N'Dji Korobba is bristly and his beard is dense. But who has been telling you that I shall for ever remain innocent of moustache or beard ? Furthermore, I should point out to Kala N'Dji Korobba that he ought never to forget that the great baobab tree, which even the elephant respects in the heart of the forest, has sprung from a grain scarcely bigger than a little Bamiko bean."

Thus defiance was hurled and accepted — in words. Who would be the first to translate it into action ? Kala N'Dji Korobba could not — tradition forbade it — provoke a younger brother. So he would be obliged to await a propitious moment. And that moment was not to be long in presenting itself.

There was in Kala a young maiden called Tene Thiegni (Pretty Monday). She was a childhood friend and, by repute, the "Ton-Moussonin" of Kala N'Dji Thieni. Each youth selected for himself a girl whose chosen knight he became. He defended her upon all occasions. He had prior right to flirt with her and she was in fact his platonic love or Ton-Moussonin.

Kala N'Dji Korobba married Tene Thiegni.

The friends of Kala N'Dji Thieni began from that moment to tease their

companion. They composed a dialogue which two of them would recite together whenever Kala N'Dji Thieni happened to be with them.

And this is how it went:

"Tell me, O Zan, do you by any chance know of a young maiden by the name of Tene Thiegni?"

"I know her very well indeed, my dear M'pe".

"Will you kindly describe her to me, then, because I, you must believe me, I do not know her at all".

"By all means. Tene Thiegni, as her name suggests, is a veritable 'Pretty Monday'. A beauty with firm, round breasts! By Allah, she is beautiful; beautiful in profile, beautiful from the front, beautiful from the back and beautiful from every angle! A nymph with white teeth like the cowries of the Orient, her lips moulded like those of the fair women of the distant east".

"And her buttocks?"

"O Zan, the buttocks of Tene Thiegni are the finest in the whole world, and no-one could ever succeed in reproducing her curves, for the mould used to make them was brought by spirits from the very dome of the heavens where souls in the moment of incarnation may admire it".

"O Zan, in the name of Allah, for God's sake, pray tell me about her bearing".

"The bearing of Tene Thiegni. Such allure, such poise! The graceful movement of her haunches is not even equalled by the languorous female ostrich as she makes her leisurely way to an amorous assignation atop a white sand dune of the Sahara".

"I have heard it said that Tene Thiegni can wriggle her whole shape superbly too. Is it so?"

"To be sure, it is the sober truth. Let Tene Thiegni but roll her hips before the most faithful of husbands and you will see him make off pell-mell, or rather run, indeed . . . what am I saying . . . gallop off like a colt which has never before felt the saddle".

"And what would a chief sacrificial priest do before her?"

"If Tene Thiegni, smiling, and especially if accompanying her smile with a come-hither look, said to the sacrificial priest: 'If you want me, take this knife to pieces and give the bits to me', with his right hand the priest would offer Tene Thiegni the sacred blade whilst with his left hand he gave her the consecrated hilt".

"Eh! And where actually is Tene Thiegni now?"

"Alas, Tene Thiegni at this moment is to be found upon an iron barque and this heavy vessel floats upon a lake which is of great depth and infested with crocodiles. This lake itself is in the midst of a dense forest which strikes terror even into the heart Koro Diarra, the grand father lion, King of the Jungle.

"No-one will ever be able to see Tene Thiegni again nor to chat with her as when, in days gone by, by the light of the moon, she used to dance the Ko Pili with her two long cotton lempe bands trailing behind her as the symbol of her virginity".

"And how came this change for the worse?"

"Because Kala N'Dji Korobba has married her, in accordance with the most rigid rules. He has paid the colas and killed the marriage ox. He has given the portions of sacramental salt. He has performed the traditonal ceremonies in her parents' fields. And I can vouch for it that a select procession escorted Tene Thiegni and Kala N'Dji Korobba and the latter has known a good fortune which will certainly have the effect of augmenting his courage and prolonging his days. Tene Thiegni will never again be known as the Ton-Moussonin of any man."

"Who is the one who is lost and 'dead' in this story?"

And then all the friends would chant the chorus in unison like this:

"It is Kala N'Dji Thieni who is lost and dead. And why? Because he alone had the privilege of frequent tetes-a-tetes with her. He was the knight of the fair Tene".

After which they would all clap their hands, repeating:

"A lost knight, a suitor spurned for ever!"

Kala N'Dji Thieni was dying of love. He had always longed to see his friend once more, the damsel he had hoped so fervently to be able to wed but whose hand he was unable to obtain as his first wife on account of the edicts of tradition.

The long separation merely served to reinforce the love of Kala N'Dji Thiene for Tene and the mockery of his companions caused him to lose his head completely. He made up his mind to violate the dwelling of him whose very name could put to flight a band of highwaymen and even warriors of great renown.

In the meantime, the troops of Kala were setting out towards the site of an invasion which was taking place against that region.

After a march of ten kilometres the commander of the expedition decided to call a halt and await the evening.

Kala N'Dji Thieni set to thinking on the one he loved, the beautiful Tene. Finally he said to himself: "He who goes to war may return but he may, on the other hand, just as well end his journey in that mysterious country from which no traveller returns. Death is the inevitable end of every living being; I do not regard death as something horrible. But to die without having ever seen Tene Thiegni again without proving to my jealous and teasing friends that I can confront any danger whatsoever for her sake, that indeed would be insupportable.

"In fact", he concluded, "I must see Tene again, come what may."

Kala N'Dji Thieni waited for darkness to fall.

The sun kissed the earth, then withdrew his rays, like a weary beast of prey pulling in his claws.

Kala N'Dji Thieni's impatience for dusk prevented him from fully appreciating the immensity of the solar disc plunging into the shades of awakening night. When darkness had completely dispelled the light of day and when the hyenas and the lions came out of their dens, and when each thicket took on the aspect of a monster lying in wait, Kala N'Dji Thieni decided that the time had come for him to return to the village and see at last, and perhaps for the last time, the beautiful Tene, that young and delicious Bambara damsel with her blue lips painted by an inspired tattoo.

Kala N'Dji Thieni arose with the greatest care. Then he sneaked silently out, grabbing his saddle on the way, to remove the fetters from his horse's legs. Silently he saddled the horse and, still without making a sound, mounted and disappeared as stealthily as a thief, into the shadows which were so dense at this phase of the month, into a moonless night with no bright star to illumine his path.

Kala N'Dji Korobba was not asleep. He kept wondering what ever could have made Kala N'Dji Thieni set off like that, at one bound. To him it seemed as though this man, so full of the ambition of youth but also possessed by a mad imprudence, must undoubtedly be looking for a way of surprising the enemy and either attacking him single handed or, at least, being the first to assail him, in the conceited urge to add one pinnacle to the facade of his glory. In Kala N'Dji Korobba's eyes such a purpose was a trifle too spectacular. So

he said to himself, "I shall not permit this young fool to commit an irreparable blunder. He is such a rare specimen in Kala that it behoves me to follow him. so then, if he falls into difficulties, he will learn that the lioncub always has need of lessons but above all needs the assistance of the old lion."

So saying, Kala N'Dji Korobba in his turn saddled his mount and, taking with him weapons of defence and of attack, he set out to follow Kala N'Dji Thiene, at a respectful distance so as not be seen.

Such a precaution was quite superfluous, for Kala N'Dji Thieni, going at a fast gallop, was not in the least concerned about whom he might encounter. He never once glanced behind him and seemed to disregard all danger which might overtake him from the rear. He hummed a war chant as he rode, interspersed with haunting fragments of songs of ill-starred love.

Imagine the stupefaction of Kala N'Dji Korobba when, arriving at the crossroads, he beheld Kala N'Dji Thieni choosing the path which led to the village.

"Where the devil can he be going now?" exclaimed Kala N'Dji Korobba. Has he perchance omitted to make the propitiatory sacrifice before climbing into the saddle? Has he possibly forgotten to take his most marvellous grisgris? Can he have been invited to an amorous assignation . . . . All the same, I shall follow him and see with my own eyes", so Kala N'Dji Korobba continued his monologue.

Once arrived in the town the young man did not hesitate or search long for his route. He took the little road which could lead nowhere but to Kala N'Dji Korobba's house. When he saw this, the heart of the Red Beast was thrown into terrible confusion, the hair of his head rose up on end and every hair upon his body bristled too. And in the twinkling of an eye, Kala N'Dji Korobba had made one thousand and eleven suppositions, some better and some worse than others, and in the words of the proverb dear to Sudanese storytellers, "the two groups of ideas did battle within the four chambers of the heart of N'Dji Korobba". The worst ones overcame the good and in the end the latter were expelled and blown out through Kala N'Dji Korobba's hugely distended nostrils. Kala N'Dji Korobba loaded his gun. As he crossed the street he endured every variety of horror, from those which one can fell and tell to those which only the red devil of the baobab tree inflicts upon unfortunates who catch him stealing his mother in law's chickens.

Kala N'Dji Korobba cursed the day of his birth; likewise he cursed his eyes and his ears for allowing him to see and hear what he ought never to have seen or heard.

"Of one thing I am certain", he said to himself "that today I shall do two irreparable wrongs. I shall kill a man and I shall dishonour a woman, if my worst fears are realised."

Convinced that he would learn of his dishonour and that he would be obliged to do all that was required of a dishonoured husband, Kala N'Dji Korobba bit his lower lip fiercely between his teeth. He screwed up his countenance, adopting such a scowling, ferocious glance that anything passing across his field of vision appeared to him fantastically doubled.

Kala N'Dji Thieni indiscreetly fastened his mount to a stake fixed at the entrance to Kala N'Dji Korobba's house and, without hesitating or waiting in the vestibule, penetrated right into the inner courtyard.

"Tene Thiegni, Tene Thiegni", he cried.

Tene, after a short silence during which she was presumably putting on her wrapper, replied:

"Who is it?"

"It is I, Kala N'Dji Thieni. I have come to see you. If you can come out it will afford me the greatest pleasure".

"To see me, at such an hour? You must have come with bad news, if so, please, I pray you, let me know the worst".

"No, Tene Thieni, I am no messenger of misfortune; on the contrary, I come to say a few private words to you concerning myself alone. I shall have to go back almost at once."

"I don't care who comes", Tene declared.

She brought out a Macina mat which she threw on the ground and placed at each end of it decorated leather cushions which were stuffed with sweet smelling herbs. She lit an oil lamp, took out her basket of cotton and sat down at one end of the mat.

Kala N'Dji Thieni took his place opposite her. "Why is it you have come to see me?" Tene Thiegni asked once more.

"Tene Thiegni . . . . We were childhood friends, weren't we? I have always held you in respect and defended your honour. Inviolate I met you and so I shall return you to whom you belong".

"You speak truly", she acknowledged. "But", she went on to say, "what I cannot understand is why you, who were always so respectful and correct when I was available and at your mercy, should wait until I am become the sacred property of someone else, and of such a one.... to come by night, against every of rule of Bambara morality and the proprieties of Kala country, to force my door. No, my dear brother Kala N'Dji Thieni, make haste to tell that you are come to inform me of my husband's death and that you only wish to prepare me for my misfortune before announcing it. I am deeply touched by your concern but I should prefer to know the whole truth, and the sooner the better".

"Only God, who created him, can kill your husband," replied Kala N'Dji Thieni. "He is a warrior . . . . ." At this word Kala N'Dji Thieni stopped as though pulled up short . . . . He took out his pipe which he proceeded to fill casually, extracted from a little woven cotton purse a flint, an iron all ready and some tinder. He then selected a morsel of tinder, held it near the flint and struck twice upon the middle of the iron. The sparks emitted from the flint set the tinder alight and Kala N'Dji Thieni lit his pipe. He inhaled two puffs which he then blew up into the leaves of the porch under which he sat opposite Tene Thieni. He gave her a long, devouring glance and sighed profoundly.

Kala N'Dji Korobba stationed for some time past within the porch, covered the two young people with his rifle, then raised his weapon and still waited, without quite knowing why. Meantime he was listening intently, so that nothing passing between the two lovers — for Tene was the lover of Kala N'Dji Thieni, — should escape his ear.

Tene went on spinning her cotton, as was the custom and Kala N'Dji Thieni watched without interrupting her.

In the meantime Tene's cat came out of the house. Arching his back he turned round and round his mistress as though placing her at the centre of a charmed magic circle. Presently he went and lay down between Tene Thiegni and Kala N'Dji Thieni, right in the middle of the mat.

Tene said to Kala N'Dji Thieni: "I have always heard it said by the servants and slaves that you and my husband are equal. Nevertheless, how actually does my husband bear himself in the wars? I should so much like to hear your appreciation of him".

"The slaves and servants of the compound are unmitigated liars. They say just so much as it pleases them to say, but verily they say little of truth. They know the black lie better than the white truth. If you want to know the truth about your husband, know that . . . ." At these words a slight unexpected

sound came from amongst the wood and straw of the porch roof. Tene's cat raised his eyes. His gaze caught that of a mouse who was squabbling with some others in the straw. The unfortunate one lost his balance and tumbled down, right between the paws of the cat which straightway strangled him without the slightest difficulty.

Kala N'Dji Thieni said in an urgent tone: "Tene, did you see how your cat treated the mouse?"

"Yes indeed, I saw it perfectly, and their struggle was brief", declared Tene.

"Well", continued Kala N'Dji Thieni, "Thus it is that your husband will treat any man who dares to confront him. He is indubitably the most valiant of the children of Kala. He is the model whom we imitate. He has never been known to glare upon a man without causing him to piss with terror".

"I am proud of my husband and I am also proud of you, who know him so well and are yet prepared in spite of it all to violate his home".

A moment or two later Tene resumed, saying to Kala N'Dji Thieni, "My brother, so far you still have not told me the reason for your nocturnal visit which is tarnishing the good name of us both and which may open two cold tombs?"

"Very well, Tene, I have come this evening to bid you farewell. Tomorrow we advance to the attack. When the enemy appears I shall certainly kill many of them but equally, perhaps, I may be killed myself. Yet to die without having heard your silvery laughter, to die without acquiring a store of your gentle words, would be to condemn myself to die daily in that country where there is no death: in the other world".

So the talk continued, without the two young people betraying by the slightest gesture any intention capable of alarming a husband's heart.

Tene Thiegni, without exciting in her lover even any of those gestures which a well brought up young man might show in the presence of an appetising female, said:

"Are you certain, Kala N'Dji Thieni, that you have not come here to possess me?"

"No Tene, I have not come to take you. I still continue and I shall for ever continue to respect the woman whom I have always loved and respected, even when she was at my mercy."

"You must be truly mad to venture into a house whose proprietor, as you yourself said, can make others piss with terror by his mere glance. You must be well aware that my husband would not hesitate to dispatch you to the other world should he surprise you in his house, beside his wife".

"Yes, Tene, I know all that and I must confess that, in truth, I am mad. Simply realise that it is in the nature of certain fools to penetrate, at the risk of their lives, into forbidden territories, merely to pause there and admire things which they desire though they may never possess.

Thus you are for me an inestimable treasure, which it pleases me to gaze upon at the risk of my life, but I shall never steal it. Besides, the purple dawn will before long transform the colours of nature and the gentle night will deprive us of his aid; I must needs go. I do not wish my elder brother Kala N'Dji Korobba to be aware of my escapade. He will believe me dead and is capable of scattering many skulls to avenge me".

At these words Kala N'Dji Korobba rapidly rejoined his mount and disappeared.

And a few moments later Kala N'Dji Thieni did likewise.

The following morning the two heros of Kala attacked the enemy. They

wounded many, killed many also and led back a long train of war captives.

Several days after their return from the wars, Kala N'Dji Korobba caused a superlative mead brew to be prepared and he invited Kala N'Dji Thieni to come and drink with him whilst playing M'Pari. This game, very popular amongst the ancient Sudanese, is played just like chess. Little sticks of wood and straw replace the pawns. The board is supplied by a square traced out upon a patch of sand or dust.

Kala N'Dji Korobba invited Tene Thiegni to stay near at hand so as to be able to serve drinks to his guest.

It is the custom, amongst the players at M'Pari, to make certain exclamations. The words pronounced are often in the nature of observations, sometimes purely poetical, some times more or less provocative and often constituting a direct challenge to a duel which may be confined merely to unkind remarks. It is not uncommon, however, for the words pronounced during a game of M'Pari to be settled by recourse to arms.

Tene served the first calabash to the two friends. Kala N'Dji Korobba, after emptying his cup cried, "Thirst quenching and, at the same time, obnoxious liquid which can make a man feel that he speaks with the voice of a king."

Thus speaking, Kala N'Dji Korobba seized betwen two fingers of his right hand two wooden sticks and place them in one of the positions of the game. Then he said, looking pointedly at Kala N'Dji Thieni, "Drink, my guest." Addressing the pieces: "Be off there, into that hole, to signify to whoever has ears to hear that, several days ago, at Kala, beneath a porch, at an advanced hour of the night, by the light of a lantern, certain words were exchanged. If they had not been pronounced Kala would be now be turned upside down. Such fear and turmoil would reign there that a pregnant camel would be seeking escape through the eye of a needle".

After which he added, "Kala N'Dji Thieni, my younger brother, let us drink! The youth who declines a drink will never accept a challenge".

Kala N'Dji Thieni understood the allusion full well. He wasted no time in trying to discover how Kala N'Dji Korobba had learnt of his interview with Tene nor, which was more important, how he had managed to overhear their conversation. He replied promptly, placing two straws in a chosen hole upon the board: "Straws of brisk repartee, plant yourselves there, straight as a young palm tree whom the impetuous winds cannot bend. And say, to whoever cares to hear that, if whoever pronounced those words beneath the porch where he sat by the most beautiful and adorable woman of Kala had suspected his words were being overheard by another, Kala would now find itself turned upside down: even if Kala and the whole world with it were so upset that the Niger returned to its source, the words which then were offered would never have been spoken".

Tene said, as she served the second calabash to the two men, "Is not he who finds a fortune without owner and guards it intact until the proprietor arrives a man worthy of trust and admiration?

But be that as it may, I declare that a woman who would give herself to any man with whom she spoke or laughed, merely out of courtesy, would be no woman worthy of the name but only like a well at the entrance to a caravanserai, open to the mercy of travellers of all sorts, conditions and castes."

Translated by Una Maclean.

LEON DAMAS

SIX AFRICAN POEMS

DEAD-BORN LOVE.

Haven't you seen the woman who looks for Aouagbé
Who makes Aouagbé run away as soon as she comes
A torn loincloth which cannot cover the body
Does not even resemble a loincloth
I Aouagbé say:
I'm fed up having you always at my heels
Shrew-mouse
I don't like your smell
And I avoid it.
Woman
You are like a butterfly now here, now there
And everywhere
The whole country knows you
We, your people, know you well enough
You and your false promises of love
Like a trap missing its prey she did not get me
And
Taking up my song again to end it
I say:
Haven't you seen that woman who runs after Aouagbé's love
Who makes Aouagbé run away as soon as she comes
A torn loincloth is not a loincloth
The shrew-mouse who never washes herself always leaves a strong smell
When she passes.

SPITE.

Deny me everything I want of you, beauty!
Deny me your body as much as you like.
Refuse it!
The maize your people eat are human eyes
The cups from which your people drink are human skulls
The potatoes your people roast in the fire are human fingers,
Refuse me as much as you like
Deny me everything as much as you want
None but me would be willing to have you!

SERENADE.

The sky is sombre like a dark blue loincloth
Mist falls like drops of fresh milk
The hyena laughs and makes the lion roar in rage
How sweet then to unfold.
To the woman of red skin.

IDYLLE.

I was drawing water from the well
When suddenly he looked at me —
I was so moved
That I let slip the rope.

CUCKOLD CONTENTED.

My wife told me
I go to the market
I too went the market
Where I did not
Where I did not find my wife.
My friend told me
I go to my shop
I too went to the shop
Where I did not
Where I did not find my friend.
Walking at the beach
At the end of the day
I see the friend
Stretched out
On top of my wife.
With a thrust of my knife
I could have certainly
Certainly killed him
If he would not just in time
Just in time have awoken.
Just to give me
To give me five pounds
Five pounds which I took
And taking back with me
Taking back with me my wife.
Because water takes off the scent
The scent of love
And money doesn't smell
And money smells of nothing.

THE SORROW OF KODIO.

We were three women
Three men
And myself, Kodio Ango
We were on our way to work in the city
And I lost my wife Nanama on the way
I alone have lost my wife
To me alone such misery has happened
To me alone Kodio, the most handsome of three men such misery has happened
In vain I call for my wife
She died on the way like a chicken running
How shall I tell her mother
How shall I tell it to her, I Kodio, when it is so hard to hold back my own pain.

These adaptations of traditional African poems first appeared in "Poémes nègres sur des airs africains", published by GLM, Paris 1948.

Translations:
Idylle, Spite, Serenade, Sorrow of Kodio and Cuckold Contented were translated by Miriam Koshland
Dead-Born Love by Miriam Koshland and Joel Heimann.

BRION AND THE FLAMES

BY E. A. JAMES

Brion strode resolutely in the pitch dark night. He strode as if it was daytime when he could see hindrances at once and clear, so that there was no reason for him to be afraid to stumble over hidden obstacles, a lost sheep or something like that or to get tripped up by loose barbed wire. He hummed a tune and thought — 'What an evening! Moonless. Such nights are always lovely; the prettiest time of the day. An evening with moonshine is false, would be. The moon is a traitress. I'll never forget how disgracefully she betrayed Louisa and me that night. She is inquisitive and immodest—a Nosy Parker. What had she to do with Louisa and me? She is suspicious too or she wouldn't want to light up everything. And how? With false light, incomplete and without sense of proportion. The glutton, she lightens every dark spot and causes a lot of ugly shadows. You can't move or she exaggerates it to the revolutionising of your surroundings. Tonight she isn't here. It is dark fortunately'.

The kerosene lamps in the houses were putting on a brave air. From far and near you could see the little flames. Brion looked agreeably about him. He admired them.

'The moon would fade them away, degrade them'.

He was near Farmer Alwright's house now. He could see the flame in the lamp very clearly. Like a merry lamb it dallied its heart out. Each time some wind reached it, it flickered with gay bows, fluttered like a ground dove, fell as if going out, then a little while later it rose straight as a pole beaming very much alive. Brion had his laugh over the flame.

'How pretty a thing fire is'.

He had heard that in the far world, further than where Segundo had been, is a place where a kind of being lives that likes fire very much; fireworshippers they call themselves. He had not quite understood what sort of creatures they were.

'If I could've had my way, I'd never had become a farmer, Grandfather has struggled to keep the cattle alive. After he passed away Father has fought with some success against their death. Since Father can' keep up the fight any longer, I'm pushing it on. All of us have done it skilfully notwithstanding this the breathing skeletons that have survived in spite of the last eight years, are rather corpses than living animals. Being a farmer is being dependent on the weather. This year the rain washes everything away, the next year not a raincloud to be seen; then even weed refuses to grow. If I could choose what I'd be? I'd be a . . . I'd be a . . . a . . . a fireworshipper. That's a nice thing to be. Every day I'll sit by the fire, say a rosary now and then and swallow dainty bits of fire in due time; nothing like hunger any more. That's life! No drought! Bah! Year after year drought! drought! drought! nothing but drought. How happy I'll be as a fireworshipper. Louisa? She'll have to be one too. We'll

squat by the fire, eat tasty mouthfuls of it and tell our beads at time. Where do they live? In some hidden place in the deep world. Will Segundo know where their home is? No. Even he hasn' been so far. If it wasn' so far I'd go there to join them. They are kind, they'll accept me and allow me to eat of their fire and recite the rosary'.

Brion drudged down the dry road, a cloud of dust went up in the darkness behind him. Eight years in succession no rain had fallen; the year before these the rain came down in torrents, like ill fated manna it smashed itself to pieces on the slime. It never stopped pouring. Four weeks, months, the whole year the sky emptied its entire capacity on the earth. The cisterns, tanks, and all those thousands of panlike objects the population kept in order to save as much water as possible were soon running over. Spouts, gutters, the water drainage could not get through their work, consequently the upper stratum of the earth was washed away in a wink, and completely. After this the water first made reservoirs of each article shortly afterward it began to rise. Though this disaster was already a murdering blow to the water poor country, yet the wind sprang up in gale force. Trees were jerked out of their foundations; roofings, tiles, slates, zincplates dashed on rambling through the air, doors, windows, pans and chairs skimmed the earth. The best part of the cattle was bound to perish in such a gale; the poor people were left in a state of beggary.

After this calamity had passed, the wind did not scrub the island any longer, lightning did not rip the sky open, thunder did not make the houses tremble, the destruction itself, the politicians Segundo and Primero set foot ashore of the island.

Both had left the island when they were but toddlers. Their parents had taken them to another island of the Caribbean, a richer one, where their fathers were employed by the oil refining works. Afterwards the boys went to Europe to study. Now that they have finished they have come back to their native island determined to help it and its population.

The two politicians demonstrated in turn:

'The disaster the hurricane had caused can be prevented; this has to be done. I'll see to it that this evil can't occur again. In order to carry this into effect I need your help. You can help me to better your position; firstly by not paying attention to the other scourge which has arrived here; secondly by voting for me'.

Thus began after an immense catastrophe the first election in the history of the island. The sophims were as at all political meetings full of hot tempered curses. One evening when Primero suffered under a lack of tricks, he squalled. alluding to Segundo, whom he regarded as a dry stick, 'We'll wade into the dry plague, and once and for all settle account with this public enemy, so that after the result of the poll he'll not trouble us any more'.

The farmers who were always up against the drought thought that he was aiming at this everlasting enemy. They applauded enthusiastically and called for more of such language. When Primero learned which phrase enabled him to draw down such storms of cheers, he laughed and from then on he trespassed upon their slip of mind and upon their pure intentions. Above all he was a good politician. 'We'll beat the drought' became the exciting closure of his harangue, Segundo had not a dog's chance against this slogan. He got one vote; Primero's.

During his four year's term of office the pinching dearth of water grew more and more wretched. One time it threatened to rain, just for a while, but the menace passed by and things went on as before.

Segundo understood that if he wanted to get in office he should have the drought instead of Primero as antagonist. When polling time was there again

he promised that if they should vote for him he was going to suck rain at each desirable day by a scientific meteorolistic procedure out of the sky. He submitted a five year plan to the island; this was a smash hit; the day was his.

In these years Primero had got a little nearer to what he experienced as the spring of richness and of esteem. The tendency of his attempt was most likely limited to this goal.

Tonight Segundo's term of service came to an end; tomorrow one of them will be . . . . . .

'No. I wouldn' be a fireworshipper. I'll be fire. Yes fire itself. Then I shan' need to eat, nor go hungry nor say the rosary. I'll have a swell time. I'll trush my tongues into the air, twist them in, swing them to the left and to the right, whirl a blue round a green, push these two on a red one in the air, floep! draw in the blue all at a sudden, and zigzag a purple round the others. I'll leave a long snake-like tongue creep over the ground and then send his head straight into the air. Yes I'll be fire. T'ill be the best time of my life'.

Brion reached Alwright's house. He knocked at the door and went in. The others were there already. Eleven men were sitting there, waiting, perceptibly impatient, for him. Brion was much younger than the rest of the men. Sixteen. He tried to walk on to the back-room to Louisa, but Alwright stopped him by getting up and saying:

'Friends, now Brion has come at last, we won' waste any more time; let's get to action'.

He indicated six men; They got up and formed a row. Brion, Alwright and the other four lined up opposite them.

Brion, was a round, stout young man. He was standing between two tall slender confidants, this made his appearance seem shorter. Compared with his neighbour over the way, a fantastic long fellow, a Goliath with derricks for limbs, he was but a dwarf with stumps.

Alwright gave a sign; the men approached one another; each one gripped the arm of his mate facing him. In rhythmical staccato they recited together:

My loyal friend
your benediction is ours
my deed is ours
my arms your true friend.

The last words were scarcely out of their mouths and with a strong pull they wrenched the limb out of the body of their loyal friend. For a while they had but one arm and held their neighbour's in their hands. In the same rhythmical staccato:

To me is duty bound
and victory your hand won.

And they wriggled the arm in their armpit. They seized the other arm of the comrade:

My loyal friend
your benediction is ours
my deed is ours
my arms your true friend.

This one was pulled out of its legal place too; and once more:

To me is duty bound
and victory your hand won.

Again it was squeezed into a pit in which it did not quite fit.

It was an absurd sight, the short Brion with grotesque limbs, hanging below the calf of his legs, and his lanky companion with wings not reaching further than his hips.

'If everything runs as smooth as this we won' have cause to complain. You know your job'. Alwright said nodding to the other row.

'We'll fix that', Brion's neighbour answered.

'Let's get moving'.

The twelve men left the house. At the end of the main street in the village they separated. Brion and his group turned down a road leading to that part of the town that was built at the foot of the hill, the other group took a path that conveyed them to the districts situated on the slope and on the top of the hill.

Brion and his men reached a house which seemed to be their destination Alwright knocked at the door. A man appeared in the window.

'Hello Segundo', Alwright said.

'Hello Alwright. Hello boys. You fellows come to see me? Come in. Come in'. The man spoke very cheerfully, obviously very pleased to see the callers. He disappeared from the window to open the door. Three of them went in, Alwright, Brion and an old man, who had been keeping up a steady conversation with Alwright all the way. This in contradiction to his habit for he was not a talkative man at all. Yet he had been speaking passionately; like a gentle man trying in vain to convince his friend of the wrong and of the cruelty he is about to commit. The others stayed outside, they knew their job

'Tomorrow is polling day, Segundo', Alwright started.

'It surely is, and I'm putting my trust in you again. I'm sure you are not thinking of letting me down'.

'A friend who haven' leave us in the lurch can be sure we'll never leave him up to the sharks'.

'When ya na put close outside ya na a-look for rain', the old man backed up Alwright.

In fact this old gentleman was Alwright's father-in-law. He was one of the old stamp. and was undoubtedly a queer member. When he did speak, you could count ten to one it was a proverb. He himself called them parables. He had never been to school therefore had not learned any European proverbs, consequently he used those he had at his disposal, the rural ones. This in contrary to the younger generation, which had had a little book-learning. They used unfortunately very few of these expressions but still more than Brion's which had passed through an elementary school. Segundo and his confidants knew none they borrowed and hired from Europe. When the old man would say: 'Pa far ochreo spoil' or 'Ya na know where water—a walk a-go ah pumpkin belly' they had to turn to Europe to point out: 'The eyes of the master fattens the cow'. and to Shakespeare for: 'There are more things in heaven than you have dreamt of in your philosophy'.

Segundo hesitated for he had not expected the parable speaker to partake in the talk. At last he replied:

'Yes I know that! I know you boys are made of the right stuff. I like to hear you speak that way. Let us toast to that. What you want to drink?'.

'Rhum!' Brion called out and he came forward swinging his jibs. 'Rhum!'

'Segundo', Alwright tried again.

'Wait a minute man, wait a minute. Rhum first. I must have fire inside of me. First fire inside, then fire outside,' Brion interjected still swinging his branches.

Segundo filled their glasses. Standing they drank to their victory. 'The day is ours,' Segundo cried out.

'We'll beat the day,' affirmed Brion picking up the bottle to refill his glass.

Segundo noticed his ape-like limbs.

"You have long arms Boy. I haven't seen a man with such bats in all my life."

Brion drank hastily. He was making sure of his fire on the inside. No sooner was his glass empty than he held it up for Segundo to fill it, and chuckled.

"Those are gorilla's arms, you are turning into a gorilla, man," Segundo said joking.

"That's why we're here, all of us are turning gorillas and the ground is getting bone-dry, so the gorillas will soon see if things keep on like this. There must be some change. Something ought to be done Segundo. Yesterday one of my cows drop down again, tomorrow one of my children going to drop down too. Diagnosis? Lack of liquid. Water! water! we need water. I'm telling you Segundo, there must be a change for the better."

"Sure, you are right, there must be a change for the better, and there will be. How can it come off? That is very simple. Go to the ballot box tomorrow and vote for me. I'll take care the reformations come about. I'm putting my trust in you and you must put yours in me. Now boys promise me you'll vote for me tomorrow. Promise me that."

"We always keep our promises Segundo but what about you? You promised us rain."

"It is rain you want? You'll have your rain! As much as you like. Plenty of rain! Elect me and you'll have it!"

"Your parents were borned here, they fled from the drought,"—"Goat Son stray if ee get grass ah ee yard."—(The old man of the parables crossed this argument to illustrate it with one of his proverbs. A thing, had he not been so excited, he would never have done. All through the lapse of the following conversation he put forth a proverb, more frequently than Brion could pick up the bottle.) Alwright continued: "By some fortune they succeeded in scraping up some money, sent you to Europe to study, now you come back here preaching a lot of nonsense about capitalist, communist, automist, meteorolist,—"pretty doesn' go in pot."—Just like that other fool Primero who're always gassing that he too is a politician, a communist. We think nothing of those things. They are of no use to us. A fly has more value than them. Perhaps they worth the devil down there where you take them from. You should have leave them there and you should have brought us that kind of rain you used to talk about. A good or bad kind hat doesn' mind, as long as it's rain. We want the ground moistened so yams and sweet-potatoes can grow, we want to see grass for the sheep and goats on the slopes of our hills instead of compitalist and such stuff."

"Now you are mixing up everything again. That scamp Primero is not a communist he is a capitalist, that means he is selling you out. He promises a thousand things he knows can't come into being. You must not believe him. He can't manage anything. Centuries ago he has had his time. Now he is done for. He is lying on his back and he knows that he can't get up, that the grave is his next haunt, he is only afraid to concede it. He knows it, he knows he has bloomed and is now drying up. He is in an agony of death; we should have pity on him, the malefactor, slavedriver, colonial! If you make a mistake and elect him you'll be putting back the time, this is against nature," Segundo finished with a mild reproach.

"All right! All right! What you say will be true we don' know. We ar'n speaking about him, he don' count, he's null and void,—"Gully na dey deep 'nough for hide worthless family" — if we considered him worth as much as a louse we'd have gone to him ourselves. But you! You don' venture to speak one nasty word of him. He and you are one. — "All tief know their border

foot-print in de san'." — You are of the same kind. What you say of him fits you too. He is the funeral-car and you the cadaverous smell. — "Calabash na a-bear pumpkin." — Brion this man here and I we're farmers we're one, no slandering, among us. Only to Brion I have to speak some hard words, sometimes, not even so often, because he won' leave my daughter Louisa alone. — "Family cutlass don' cut deep" —

"I have long arms and want another drink", Brion interrupted him, he refilled his glass, swallowed the rhum quickly, filled all the glasses, drank his and Alwright's. "I wish I was outside to polish off that nice piece of work. I can' go outside to see to the fire?" he asked. Nobody paid attention to him. Alwright finished with:

"You are bordering us in with the whole boiling of European nonsense but you don' fulfill your undertakings." — "Word ah mout'na load ah head." — "For heaven's sake Alwright use your common sense. How do you expect that scoundrel to try to accomplish his promises.—" Stranger na know burial-groun'—". He is gulling you. He has nothing to offer, he can't work, he is not a whale at work not even a scrub. — "Nothin' good a-come out a black hen chicken." His whole tirade is a bunch of lies. In this balloon he is superfluous ballast. He must be cast out. Hold him by the scruff of his neck and fling him out. Your worn shoes? You throw them away, don't you. Do the same with this mongrel. His is a pair of worn shoes, throw him away, don't let him hurt your feet. I'll . . . . .

"O.k! O.k! You are right. He has deceived us. He promised he was going to diminish the drought, we believed him and elected him. For four years he was allow to sit in the golden chair. In those days no rain fell. Not even a rain-cloud passed. Not even the seawind which had once lost its way that day didn' drop a nipple of salt-water. Nothing! nothing looking like rain. We know we were looked upon as fools. — "Ashes col' puppy lay down." — The next time we voted for your rain. You chased him out of the big chair and got into it. The rain held off all the same. You was to make us prosperous by . . . with by . . a new kind ofl rain you had got to know of back in Europe. How you called that rain Brion, wet... meto..."

"Meteorological rain, I want another drink."

"Yes that was it. What about that."

"You want rain? It is rain you want! Elect me and you'll get more than rain."

Alwright looked hard at Segundo, he said angry:

"No polling tomorrow. You have been sitting for four years in the big chair the only thing we got was drought. Since you two came here with your capinist and the rest of your twaddle, you have chased every good thing. With you came the drought and deceit."

"I know. I know that old crow has deceived you but I'll . . . . "

Segundo retreated to his old friend rhetoric. He began to oblige with one of his bombastic sophisms. This did not suit Alwright. Annoyed he stopped him with:

"Of course you are right Mr. Segundo."

He got up and left the house. His comrades followed him. Brion took the bottle along with him. He slammed the door behind them.

At this sign flames whirled about the house, they blazed up, occupied the doors and made a good guarded place of the window. The dry wood groaned and grated, the fire crashed and crackled. Brion was in air. He wished he was one of those flames.

Of the hill between the dancing little flames of the kerosene lamps, there where Primero's house stood, jaunty flames leapt to heights. The fire had started

its benediction or destruction up here first, consequently, those flames were brighter and had more colour variations. Brion liked both of them. He could not decide which he should admire. His friends left the yard. They trudged along the stone-dry road to their farms, dust following them. — How you got to be a fireworshipper? Where do they live? I can' ask Segundo no more. I'll have to remain a farmer. Such nice flames! Such beautiful colours. This is something like a fire! —

Joyfully he ran round and round the house in order to see the fire from all sides. He forgot the drought and hardly realised his arms were borrowed.

THE IMMIGRANT

BY EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

Northern Wind
sweeping down from Sahara
flings a grey scarf round me on and off,
the car torpedoes through the smoky haze:
I wonder what you do to my interior —
burning dry the mucous
piercing
scouring
my lungs —
savage harmattan!

Northern wind
filtering
through tree and grass and me
you hear my windows open
with a creak of hinges —
windows that were shut so long
oh, so long
in the painful south of the south,
and you laugh at me —
rollicking harmattan!

Northern wind
smelling of what I cannot smell
reminding me of things I can't or daren't remember,
what is it you do to me?
If it's remaining embers your
wasted fingers
fumble for
or violence
you're whipping me into,
groping
among slumb'ring drives of long ago down
in the cellar of the brain —
ah, save your breath;
I feel a certain void
now my enemies are out of sight;
only distant sound of long-tongued hounds
I hear
across the Congo and Zambesi and Limpopo
down in the painful south of the south,
and my anger

is a sediment
in the pit of my stomach
waiting
for Time's purgative or agitation —
harrowing harmattan!

Northern wind
all I know
is that you numb and jolt me
lash the water off my flesh
and fill me with a sense of insufficiency,
vague longings and forlorn moments and
brittle promises — maddening!
Twelve months I heard of you
there in the humid side of your native sands
where heat
oozed
from under me,
denuded
some of the lump of southern pain:
you did not come,
I came so far to meet you.
Yesterday I watched the leaves
go fluttering
down
down
to kiss the ground before your majesty —
pretentious thing!

Northern wind
now whimpering
whining
now lisping
dead prophecies
collected from ruins of lost empires,
you weave
knotted fingers
through tree and grass and me
blowing down the serest:
stop,
tremble
when you see the savage green of us
beyond the touch of you!
Not like the lusty August winds
of the vibrant painful south of the south,
spinning us into
desperate tears and laughter
anger, hope —
blistering interlace —
still pushing us on to hell or heaven,
we running fighting running,
straining
like a universe of bending reeds.

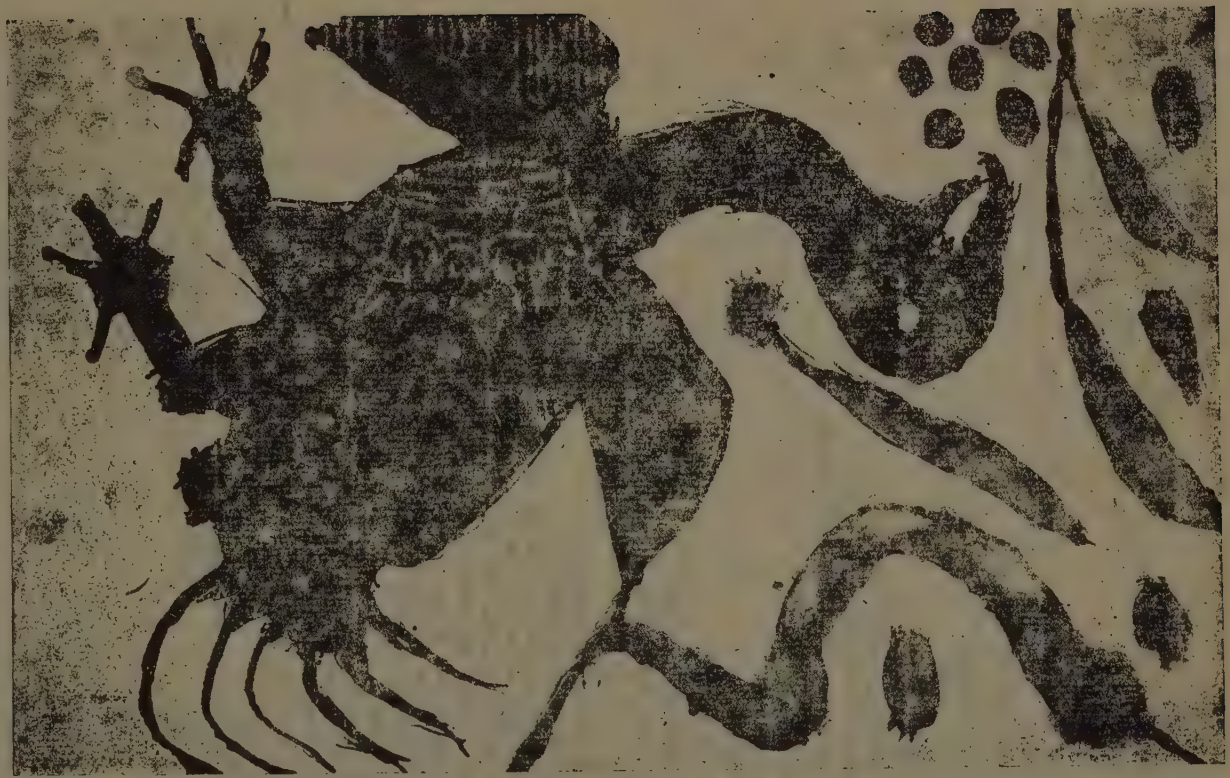
Rather that,
northern wind,
than the long hours of sleep,
oh, so long,
that make a yawning descant
to your impotent howling,
the long mental sleep
that knows no longing
for even the now unattainable,
no unfulfilled urges
heartburns and lingering angers,
no fires kindled by wanton men
beaten out
in psychotic panic
left smouldering smouldering smouldering
in the negro heart
in the agitated painful south of the south.
When will you stifle
this yawn of ancient languors
in the range of your compass —
indifferent harmattan?

Northern wind
while I've been talking
I've become aware of one thing
I had only surmised
since I left the
palpitating painful south of the south
they've done it to me —
taught me the violence,
revenge of Europe,
uncivilized me
by the law of
paper
gun
baton,
made me lie to them and smile,
made me think
anger and bitterness
and running fighting running
were man's vital accessories.
Now here I fume and dig and paw the earth,
bellow
poised panting like a bull for th' encounter and —
ah, no visible foe,
resistance none,
no dazzling red;
Ah the aching void in me,
neutralized acidity of my slime!
Now you know
the unsteady fulcrum of an immigrant!
Tell me,
is this divine indolence —

this
the horizontal sleep of the north?
the secret of the urge to be
only to be?
or just the great immensity of Northern Sleep?
Is it Tao's sweet narcotic wisdom —
spirit of harmattan?

Northern wind
you know nothing.
Only, since morning
I've ridden layer after layer of grey
my nose is dry
your load trapped in my hair.
You've followed me all day
relentlessly
into the catacomb of night
and still I feel
th' unholy hounds of the
bleeding painful south of the south
chasing after me,
you flapping about my head
gyrating like a pack of idiots
in and out between the running wheels —
Enough!
I shan't be wooed:
Shelley's long long dead,
no messages thrown to the winds anymore
Enough
of dehydrated kisses,
barren maid,
no night club this!
But now I think of it
I'll stop at the roadhouse here
for a beer
just for a while —
the immigrant's journey's a long long one,
heavy.
He tunnels through
back again
beneath
pounding footsteps of three decades and more of hurt
on the beaten road above
weighing down
down on him.
When I burst into the dawn of brooding questions
I shall yet look at more butterflies, moths and leaves
you nailed
on my radiator
like a lover of curios who wants his pieces
dead and flat.

Morning!
New dawn tells me
that void can never last,
for the immigrant's journey's a long long road.
Over centuries
they scrambled
for my Mother
from across the frontiers of snowbound boredom
decay
stale wines and bodies,
clawed down her green innocence
mauled her limbs
sold her shrines
planted
brass and wooden crosses
knocked them down at skittles
gaming for the land
while hungry eyes transfixed on a miracle
high on Calvary.
I'm a leopard
born of
a Mother
a God in torment,
converging point of centuries of change,
a continent of test-tubes.
My claws have poison :
only let me lie down a while,
bide my time,
rub my neck and whiskers,
file my claws and remember.
Then my mind can draw the line between
the hounds and hunted of the lot
in the blazing painful south of the south;
use their tools and brains —
thanks for once to ways of white folk.
And in yonder land of peace and calm,
you think I'll change my spots ?
No matter,
no regrets :
the God of Africa
my Mother
will know her friends and persecutors, civilize the world
and teach them the riddle of living and dying.
Meantime,
let them leave my heart alone !



TWO YORUBA PAINTERS

BY ULLI BEIER

Painting is not an important form of traditional African art. The Yoruba form no exception in this. Their genius was mainly expressed in woodcarving and bronze casting, and although they used to paint the walls of their shrines with decorative designs, these murals cannot compare with Yoruba plastic arts, either in the perfection of technique, the richness of styles or the power of expression.

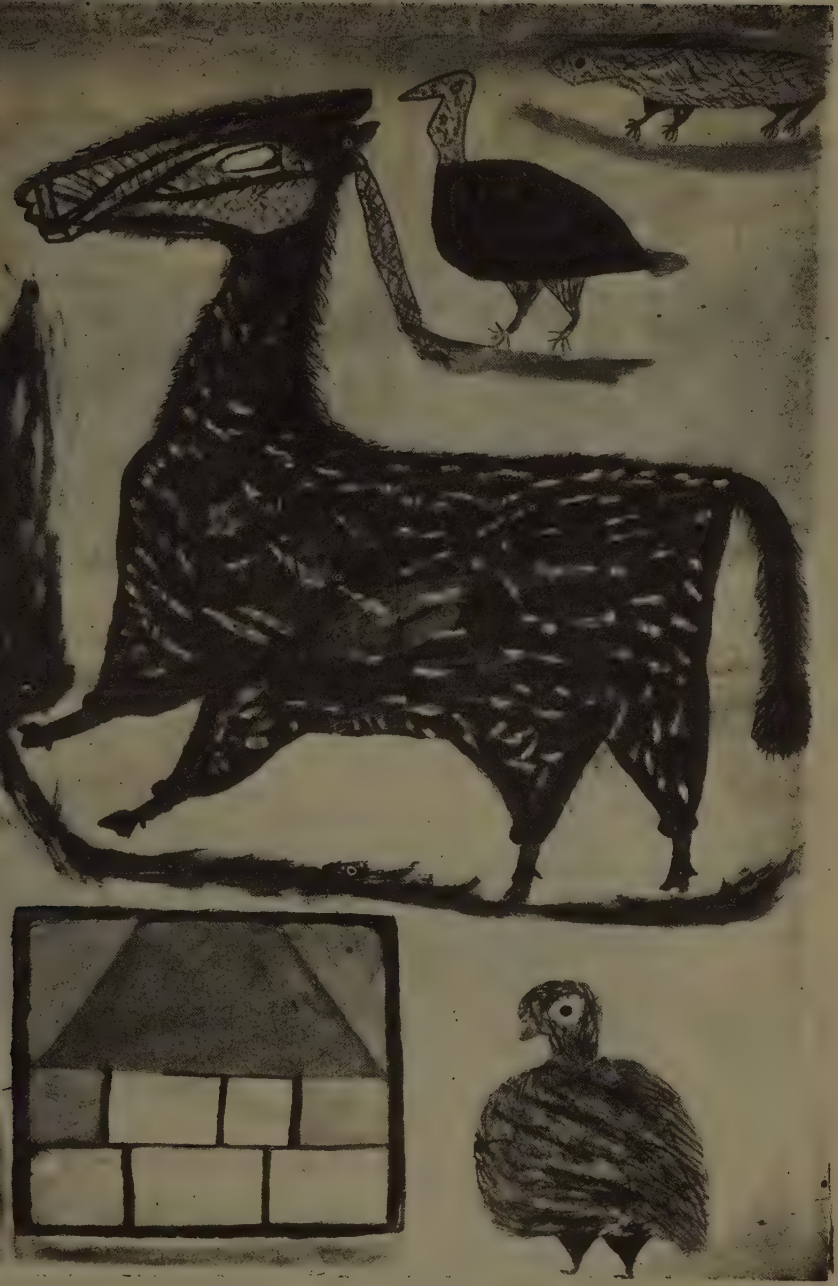
One reason for this is, that fast colours were not readily available. The different chalks and ochres, the camwood and indigo are usually washed away from the walls by the first rains. Moreover painting was never practised as an end in itself, but was always seen in relationship to architecture on the one hand and to religion on the other. Usually the paintings consist of a series of sacred signs and symbols, arranged in an ornamental pattern, so as to decorate the wall. (See ODU: a journal of Yoruba studies, No. 8: YORUBA WALL-PAINTING.) As a means of self-expression, painting was never used.

One should have thought that the contact with European civilization might have freed the latent African talent for painting. A new generation of Yoruba, that was no longer in the rigid social and religious context of the traditional pattern could conceive of painting as an end in itself, as an individual, non-functional pursuit. New materials had also become available, and a stimulus could be provided by examples of foreign art. But so far, the new school of Yoruba painting has failed to appear. With very few exceptions the genius of the younger generation seems to apply itself to literature and music rather than to the visual arts. This is perhaps not very difficult to understand. The greatness and power of traditional art looms large over them. Yet it is in an art form they do not wish to draw inspiration from. It is a way of life they wish to break away from and with which they do not wish to be identified: for so powerful was European prejudice towards the African way of life, that the younger generation of Africans now has been infected by it. To many, traditional religion is still suspect as "idol worship" and traditional African art is associated in their minds with the (meaningless) word "fetish". No wonder, that whenever they venture into the field of painting they aim at a superficial realism which is "safe" and socially acceptable. This tendency is further helped, because the tastes of most Europeans in Africa who are likely to influence them is singularly Victorian. The road from traditional African art to modern European art is almost a sort of short cut, but nobody seems to guide the young African in this direction. Instead he is led into the blind alley of nineteenth century realism and he is content to *report* instead of to *interpret* the world. I know there are some exceptions to the general rule, but on the whole new African painting is imitative and inhibited. I believe, however, that this is the result of misdirection and not of inherent lack of originality.

I received something like a proof, when some years ago Susanne Wenger and myself incited a number of patients in the Abeokuta mental home to paint. We were by no means attempting to dabble in "art therapy" which we were quite unqualified to do. We had come to the mental home purely by accident. We had been asked by a friend to visit a patient there. We were intrigued by some of the people we saw, and were looking for an excuse to see them more often. We had been excited by the complex, fascinating personalities of some of these men.

We took great care not to *teach*, but merely to encourage. Painting was something completely new for the patients, they had never handled a brush and had never seen paintings or pictures, except for the glossy magazines that benign nurses circulated in the home. To our astonishment more than half of the people who tried (the work was of course completely voluntary and some showed no interest) turned out to be gifted artists. Each one of them developed a completely individual style. The painters did not copy each other, nor were they influenced by photographs or adverts in the magazines, that provided their only outside influence. Our own job consisted merely to create an atmosphere in which the artists could feel happy and free to produce whatever they liked. Thus these artists were able to produce highly original work, because there was neither an inhibiting social pressure, nor had they been prejudiced towards tradition by a form of Western education, because they were all more or less illiterate. Another impressive fact was that the artists did not only find their own personal style, but also their own technique, suited to express their ideas. Here again they were not taught, but evolved everything themselves.

Out of the large number of artists we present two in this issue of "Black Orpheus". Painter T. had an exceptionally tragic life. Six years before we met him, he had killed a woman, but however hard he tried he just could not remember it or any details leading up to the tragic event. Being considered "unfit to plead" he was sent to the mental home. When we met him, he was a sad, but completely normal person. He was extremely kind, always helping his companions in the home. He was generally liked by patients and wardens and he was a thoroughly likeable person, for whom we soon felt real friendship. Like nearly all the patients he had never held a brush in his hands. In spite of this he worked with astounding confidence and sureness right from the start. I remember our first painting session. T. went straight to the paints, and while the other artists were still hesitating, and wondering what it was all about, he had already produced a large composition of a palm tree with two snakes and birds. The whole thing had the boldness of forms and the sureness of touch of a Fernand Leger. During the first period of his artistic career T. worked in this bold, decorative manner. He produced simple but very striking compositions, his favourite subjects being snakes, birds and lizards. (See Plate II) There was a cool elegance in his forms during this period, that could have made him an ideal designer of posters or covers for "Vogue". The masterpiece of this period was undoubtedly the large horse on Plate I. This shows an almost sovereign assurance, and has a most exciting, original treatment of the head. At the same time, this painting shows the beginning of a new period. The treatment of the head showed that T. was a more complex person than one might hitherto have guessed. So far his painting had been formal and decorative and distinctly aloof. He never put any personal feelings into his pictures, he was merely interested in design. This painting shows the first attempts to develop a new technique. T. shows new interest in the use of colour, particularly in the body of the horse. Up till then, colour had always been of secondary importance in his work. Now he began to produce rich effects by working in several layers of paint, one on top of the other, aways allowing the bottom layers to slightly shine through from underneath.



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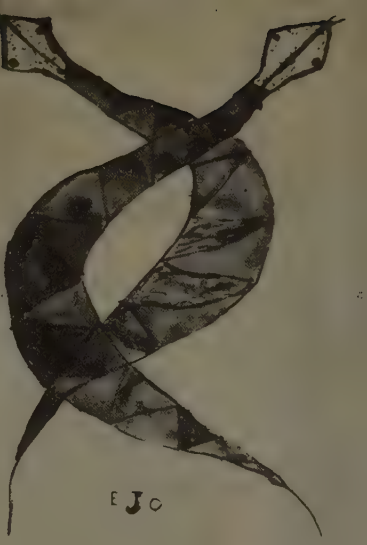
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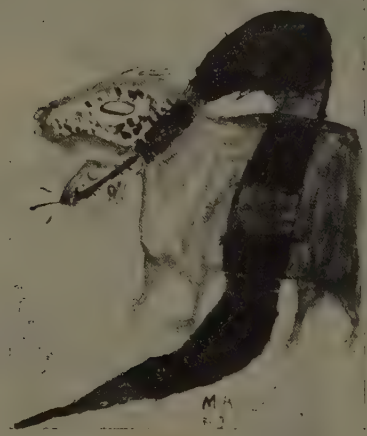

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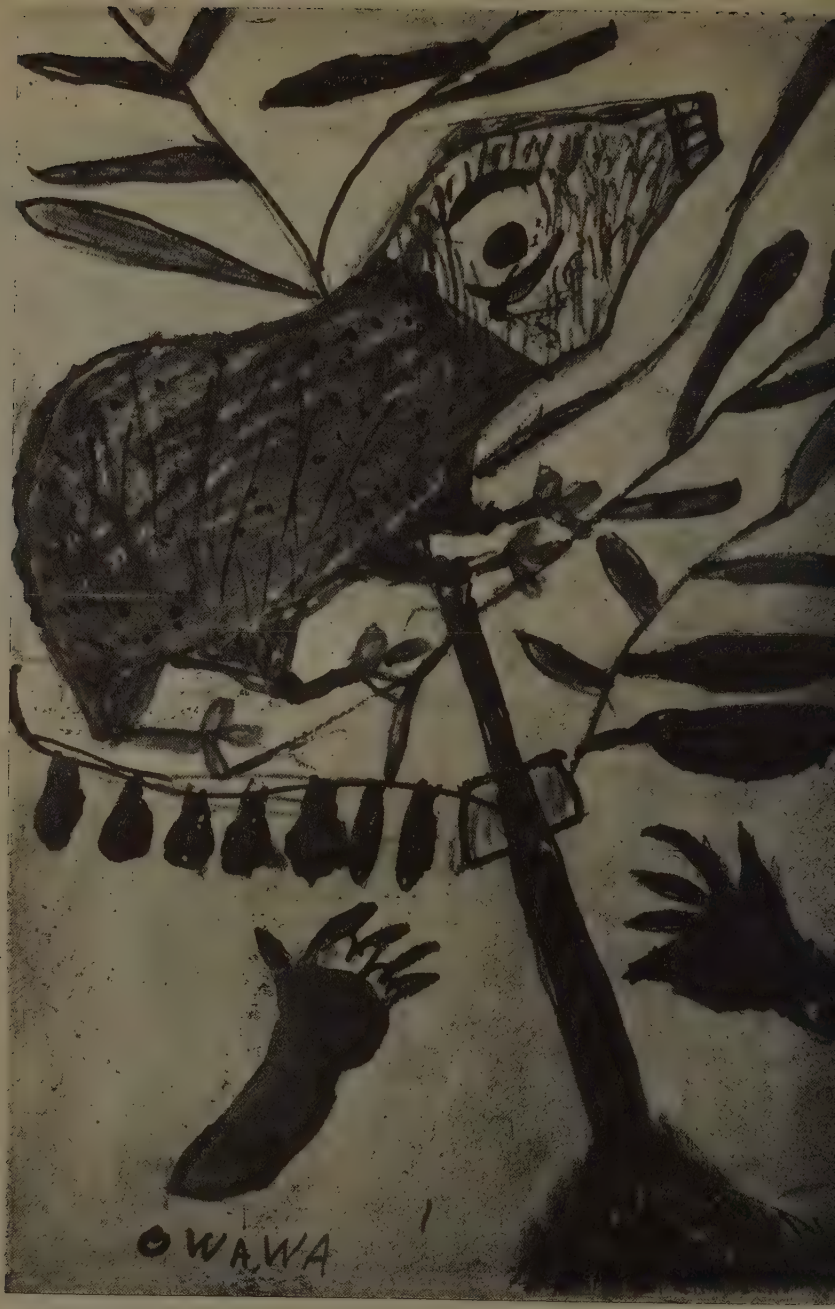
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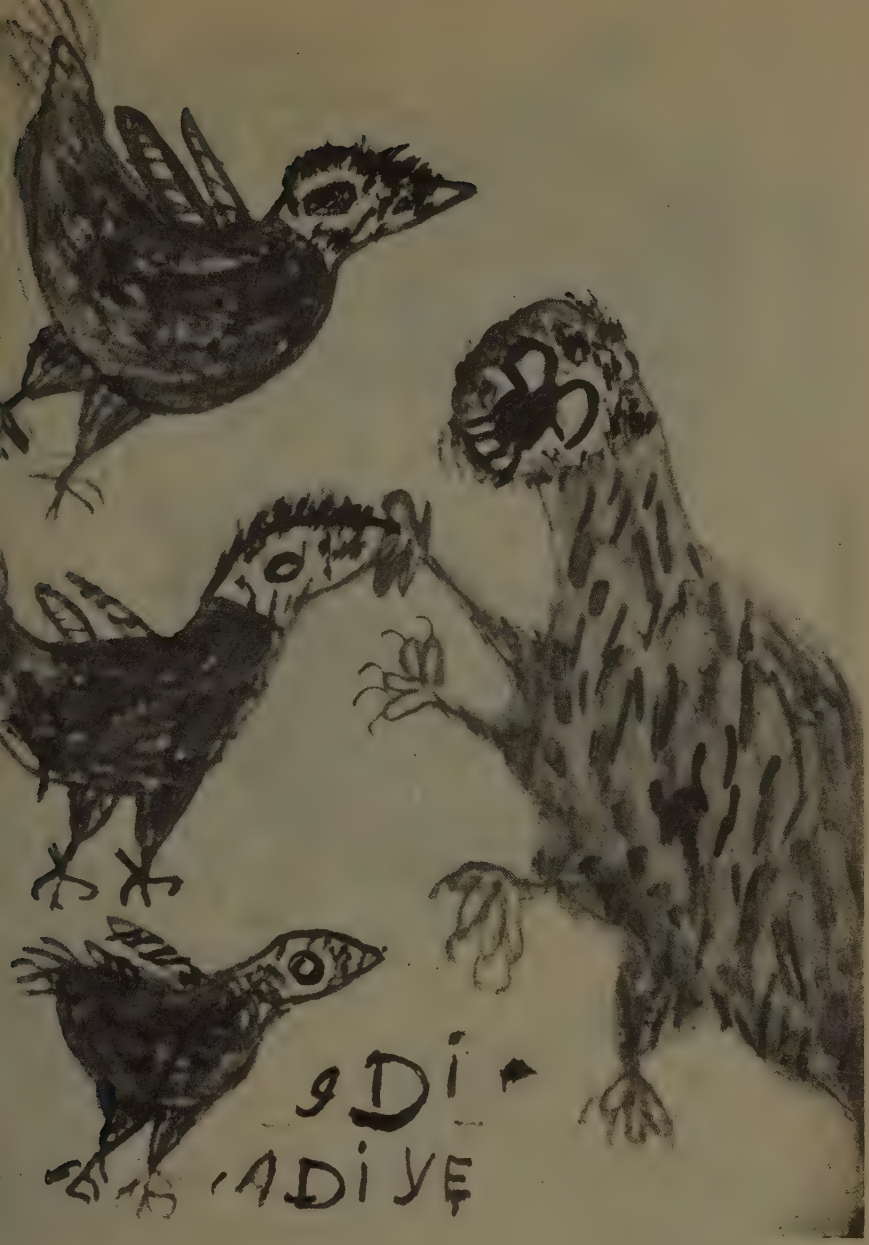
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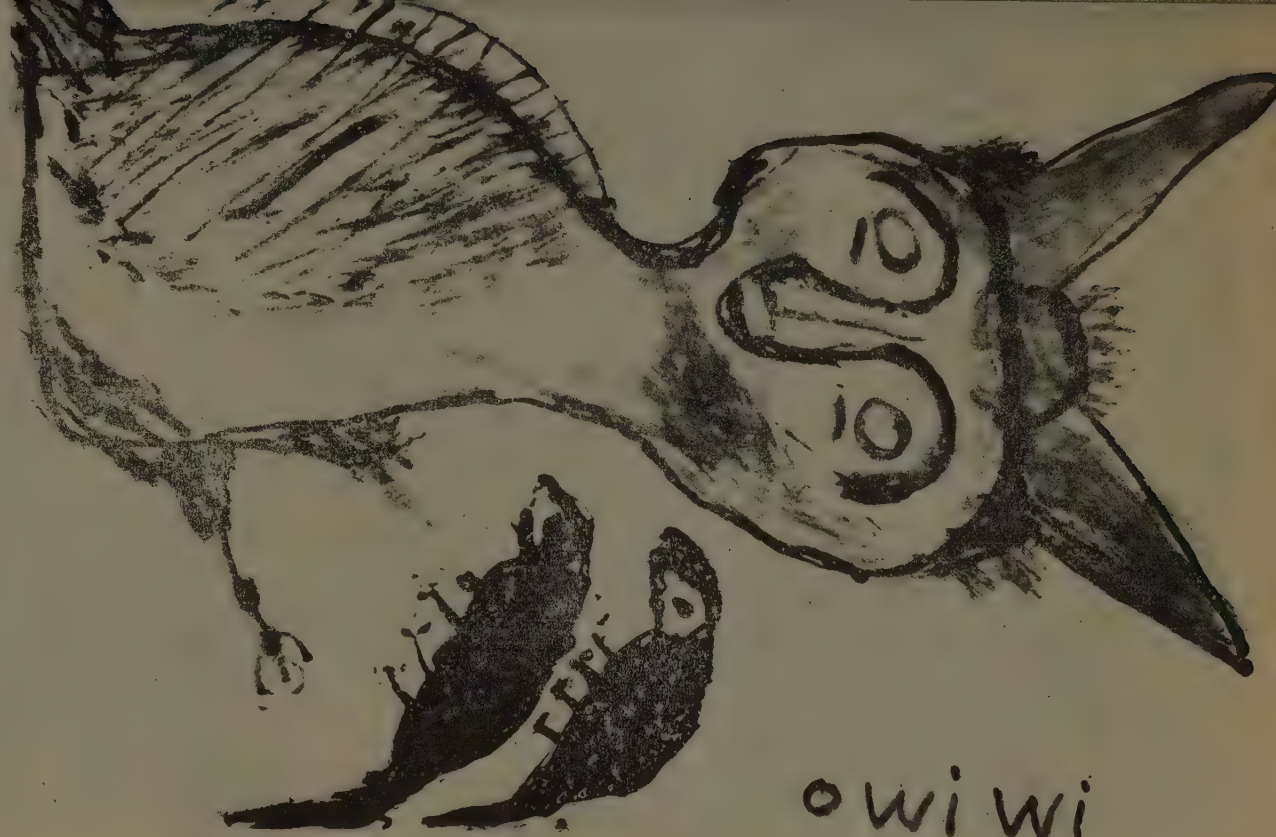

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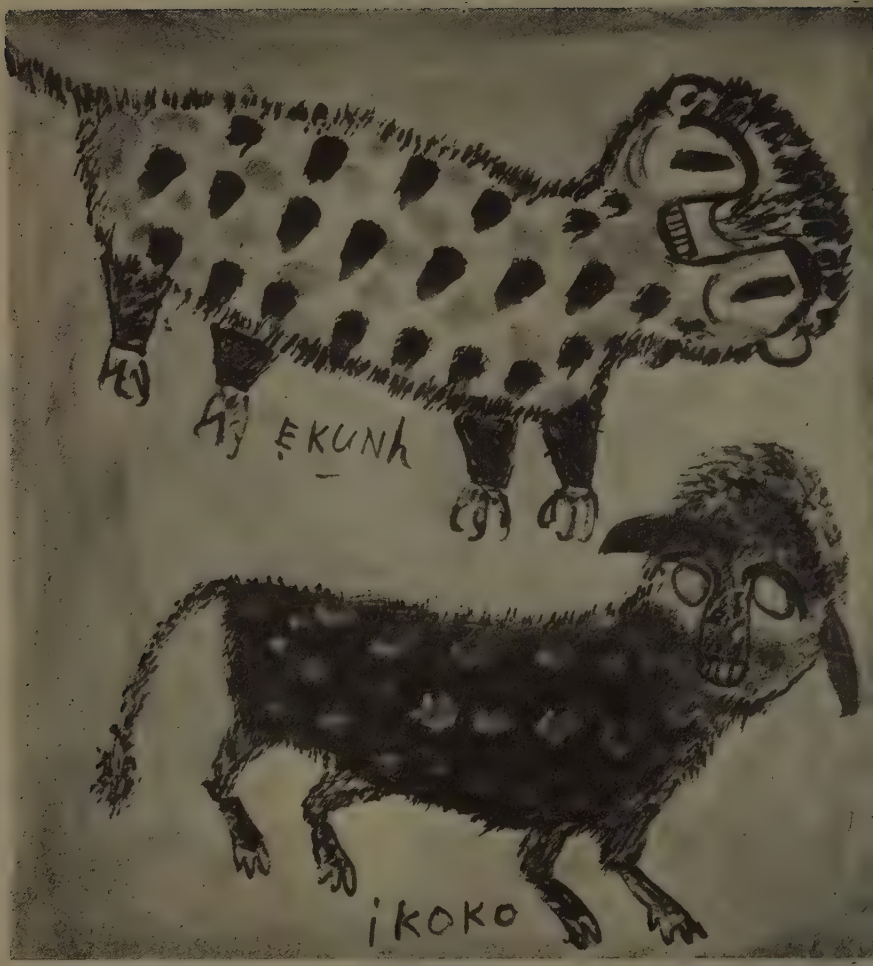
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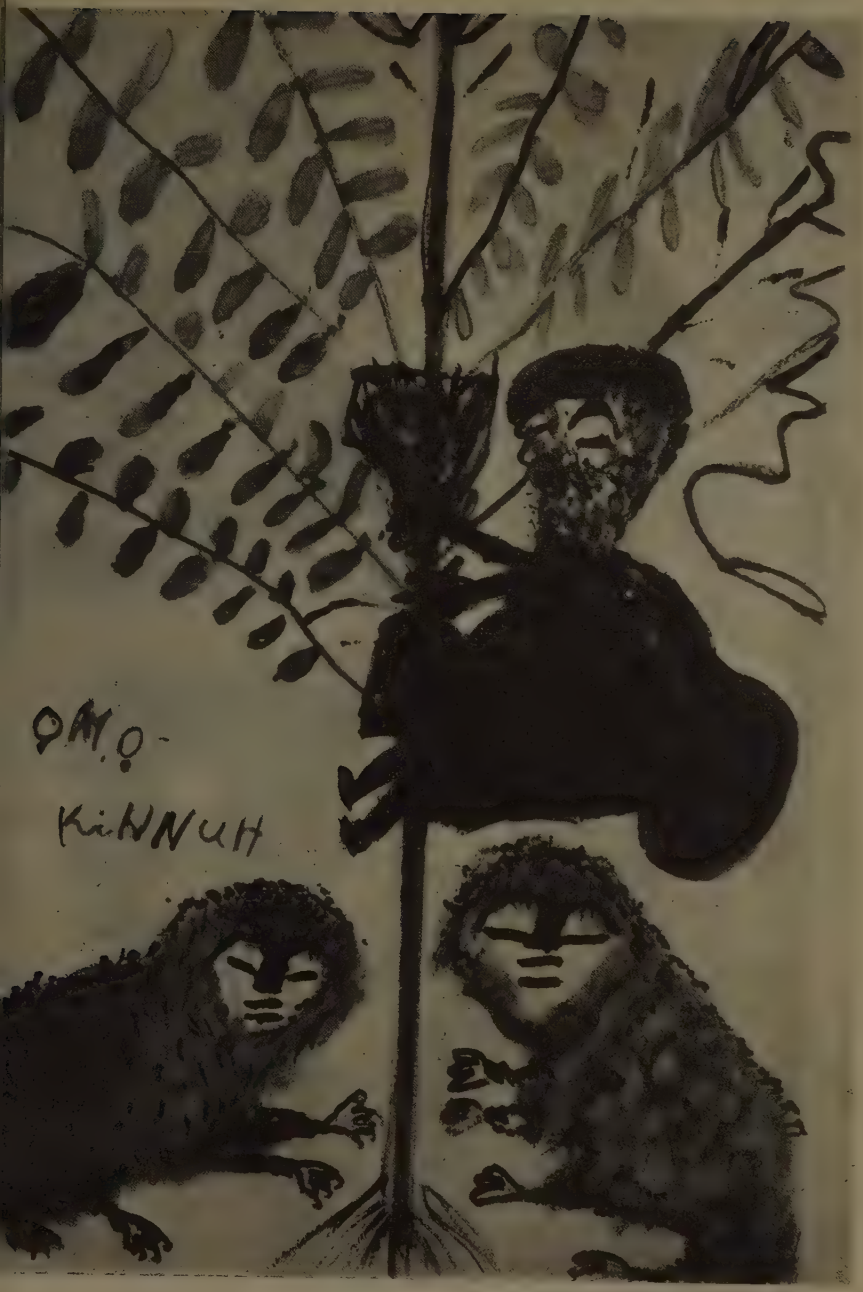
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SERGEANT ESCORT POLICE

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Table
Chair

By now T. felt sufficiently at ease with us and with his new profession of a painter, to slightly relax the austere aesthetics of his earlier work. With his newly developed technique he now began to paint a large series of animal pictures: the buffalo and the boar (Plate III) the tree bear (Plate IV) the leopard (Plate V and VIII) and the lion (Plate VI), were his favourites. The elegance now begins to vanish, so does the confidence and the aloofness. The pictures become intimate and human. They reveal now an extremely tender person, The buffalo for example is painted with gentle affection. But there is also torment (the leopard on Plate V) and fear (the tree bear with two horrible claws gripping for him.) There is something infinitely pathetic about the two toy lions on Plate VI. Suddenly the artist reveals his own character in his work, we feel something of his affection and longing, and also of his melancholy. But in spite of the obvious sadness in the cat (Plate VII) these were the happiest days of T. He found great satisfaction and relief in painting. Perhaps it meant more to him than to any other patient. Unfortunately this situation was not to last. T. was certified "sane" and declared "fit to plead". So incomprehensible is the law in these matters, that he was now given a life prison sentence for the deed that had been committed seven years earlier, and of which he still could remember nothing. During the last months in the mental home gloom and depression set in, as the artist knew of his impending transfer to prison.

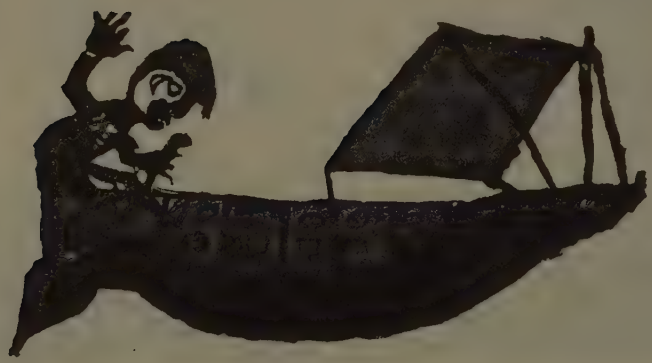
And once more his style and technique change. Suddenly it is people he is interested in, not animals. Sad, disillusioned people, like the policeman and the king on Plate X (top). His technique has become simpler, too. He has hard outlines, and simple, loud colours. There is bitterness and suffering in his pictures. Really frightening is the man holding a cross in a monstrous animal claw. (Plate X bottom right.) It is almost like an indictment of our double-faced culture, that talks of Christianity and love, but knows no mercy. His final phase is most pathetic. During the last few weeks he painted figure compositions, that express a terrible sense of frustration and loneliness. The people are all depicted in tense and frustrating situations. They are either fighting, or punishing, or somehow failing to communicate with each other. (On Plate XI top right a ball is thrown from one person to another, but will evidently fail to reach its destination.) The figures are all moving on different planes, which is also symbolical of frustration and isolation. The colours have become extremely simple, almost coarse. He has given up his subtle technique of painting. There are no more subtle layers of paint and complex effects. He now uses black, and rickets blue, and lemon yellow and a "poisonous" green. All colours are applied solidly and harshly juxtaposed. There are very hard black outlines to the figures, and sometimes the whole picture is enclosed in a heavy black frame that weighs down on the figures and seems to suggest extreme depression. A wavy line at the back of the figure's head represents the brain. The artist's worried state of mind is thus exteriorised. These were his last pictures. The transfer to prison has ended his career as a painter. Much though we tried, we were not allowed to continue a painting class in prison.

So moving and touching is the story of this remarkable artist, that I have here related it as a background story to his work. But this should not lead one to regard his paintings merely as documents of psychological or psychiatric interest. This is no more justified in his case, than, say, in the case of van Gogh. T. is an artist of great originality and his work must be judged as art, not as a documentary "case history". Every human being has a "case history". But in the end it is of little interest whether Dostoyewski was an epileptic or not — all that really matters is that he was a great writer. Artists can come from any walk of life, and they can be healthy or diseased, but such circumstances are really of secondary importance.

T.'s work which is reproduced on the centre plates of this journal can be compared and contrasted with another painter, D. of whom we show nine pictures on pages 2; 4; 15; 22; 28; 32; 43; 46; 60: There is a very superficial resemblance with the work of T. The artist's favourite subject are animals, Horses, birds and various bush animals are his favourites. His drawing is bold and firm, in fact energetic. His colours are nearly all earth colours, browns and ochres, with the exception of a dull ultramarine, which forms a strong contrast. (The bird on page 4). But these animals are quite different from the gentle, suffering creatures of T. On the contrary they seem to be endowed with incredible vigour and energy. There is a wonderful sense of movement and activity in these pictures. The creatures are running, eating and excreting all at the same time. D. is a painter of vitality, of power, of life force. There is a dynamic explosive quality about all his work. Although his animals are highly stylised, they give an extraordinary impression of reality. They are organic, full-blooded creatures quite unlike the dreamy, imaginative lions and leopards of T. The animals of D., highly decorative as they are, they yet seem to jump out of the page to assume an independent life of their own. Rather different is the man in the boat (see below). This motive was treated several times by the artist. There is here the same vigour of design and the same sense of movement. The gesture of the oarsman is highly dramatic. Yet there appears an added sense of sadness. Involuntarily the man in the boat makes one think of Charon, the classical symbol of death.

D.'s personal history is of no consequence for the appreciation of his pictures. It is, however, of interest to know that he was a highly religious person, who derived his strength and vitality from a sense of unity with God and the world.

T. and D. are immensely sympathetic artists, of great originality and considerable power of expression. It is strange to think that they might never have touched a brush in their lives, had it not been for our chance meeting. How much talent, how much genius must there be latent in this country!



GABRIEL OKARA

TWO POEMS

PIANO AND DRUMS

When at break of day at a riverside
I hear jungle drums telegraphing
the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw
like bleeding flesh, speaking of
primal youth and the beginning,
I see the panther ready to pounce,
the leopard snarling about to leap
and the hunters crouch with spears poised;

And my blood ripples, turns torrent,
topples the years and at once I'm
in my mother's laps a suckling;
at once I'm walking simple
paths with no innovations,
rugged, fashioned with the naked
warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts
in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.

Then I hear a wailing piano
solo speaking of complex ways
in tear-furrowed concerto;
of far away lands
and new horizons with
coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint,
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth
of its complexities, it ends in the middle
of a phrase at a daggerpoint.

And I lost in the morning mist
of an age at a riverside keep
wandering in the mystic rhythm
of jungle drums and the concerto.

YOU LAUGHED AND LAUGHED AND LAUGHED

In your ears my song
is motor car misfiring
stopping with a choking cough;
and you laughed and laughed and laughed

In your eyes my ante-
natal walk was inhuman passing
your 'omnivorous understanding'
and you laughed and laughed and laughed.

You laughed at my song
you laughed at my walk.

Than I danced my magic dance
to the rhythm of talking
drums pleading, but you shut your
eyes and laughed and laughed and laughed.

And then I opened my mystic
inside wide like
the sky, instead you entered your
car and laughed and laughed and laughed.

You laughed at my dance
you laughed at my inside.

You laughed and laughed and laughed.
But your laughter was ice-block
laughter and it froze your inside froze
your voice froze your ears
froze your eyes and froze your tongue.

And now its my turn to laugh;
but my laughter is not
ice-block laughter. For I
know not cars, know not ice-blocks.

My laughter is the fire
of the eye of the sky, the fire
of the earth, the fire of the air
the fire of the seas and the
rivers fishes animals trees
and it thawed your inside,
thawed your voice, thawed your
ears, thawed your eyes, and
thawed your tongue.

So a meek wonder held
your shadow and you whispered:
"Why so?"
And I answered:
"Because my fathers and I
are owned by the living
warmth of the earth
through our naked feet."

DISCUSSION ON CAMARA LAYE

CAMARA LAYE: AN INTERPRETATION

BY JANHEINZ JAHN

In No. 3 of "Black Orpheus" Mr. J. A. Ramsaran gives an interpretation of Camara Laye's symbolism in "The Radiance of the King". Mr. Ramsaran relates Laye's symbolism to Kafka, and he looks to Christianity and Islam for further comparisons. But I think that we could find a more convincing explanation nearer home: in *African* thinking. I should like to consider here Camara Laye's *two* books, because the first is a key to the second. In "The Dark Child" Camara Laye shows his understanding and respect for African traditions, and in "The Radiance of the King" he makes this tradition work on a stranger.

In "The Dark Child" Camara Laye shows the new spirit of French West Africans towards tradition. He did not consider his African childhood as something remote, primitive, something to be ashamed of. On the contrary: looking back on it from a distance, and having learned the technical skills European education had to offer, he discovered that these skills had been animated, and had been more closely related to man in his native civilisation. In his novel he describes lovingly the work of his father, a goldsmith, who was in his way a technician, but who is helped by the praise-singers while he works.

Listen how Camara Laye describes the actual smelting of gold: "My father used to utter actual words at this time, I know that he was uttering them in his mind. I could see it by his lips. What were the words my father's lips were forming? I do not know, I do not know for certain: I was never told what they were. But what else could they have been, if not magical incantations? Were they not the spirits of fire and gold, of fire and air, of fire born in air, of gold married with fire — were not these spirits he was invoking? The operation that was going on before my eyes was simply the smelting of gold, but it was something more than that: a magical operation."

"During the whole process of transformation the praise-singer had kept on singing his praises, accelerating his rhythm, increasing his flatteries, as the trinket took shape, and praising my father's talents to the skies. Indeed, the praise-singer participated in a curious — I was going to say direct, effective — way in the work. He, too, was intoxicated with the joy of creation, he declaimed his rapture, and plucked his harp like a man inspired; he warmed to the task as if he had been the craftsman himself, as if the trinket had been made by his own hands."

This scene illustrates and emphasises the importance and the quality of the word in Africa, the effective power, of the creative word, which has such importance in African philosophy. Senghor, the famous poet and philosopher from Senegal, in one of his essays comments on the scene: Laye's father is forging a golden jewel. The prayer, or rather the poem, which he recites, the

song of praise which the Griot sings as he works the gold, the dance of the smith at the end of the operation, it is all that — poem, song, and dance — which, more than the gestures of the craftsman, accomplish the work, and make it a work of art.

Thus finally all human doing and creating is a kind of magic, and a formula of chemistry, a calculation of statistics, what else is it than a magic formula, the right word in the right moment to accomplish a creative mystery. Camara Laye although an engineer, remained related to his African tradition and thus did not lose his soul in the technical environment because he was able to give to those abstract formulas a spiritual meaning, the living meaning of a symbol.

In his second book, "The Radiance of the King" he does even more. The whole book is full of symbolism. It usually is considered as an ingenious allegory about man's search for God. But I think that the book cannot be seen in this sense only, it is ambivalent, even multivalent, as Senghor says of all African art. The hero of the book is Clarence, a European, who finds himself without the help and support of his countrymen in an African environment. He is without money, without hope of outside help. He is thrown exactly into that position in which many Africans often find themselves in the European world. He has to conform. And thus he becomes gradually initiated. The whole book can be considered as a lesson in African wisdom.

Clarence concentrates his hopes on the African king. He stands in the dust of the street and watches the king pass. A beggar who is also watching promises to put in a good word for him, so that Clarence might get a job. When the beggar reappears, Clarence was trying to read the beggar's face, but he could make our nothing at all: he had been too short a time in this country to be able to decipher the expressions on the black men's faces. "Well," he asked. — "I am sorry," said the beggar. "There is no post available for you." — "But I would have accepted any post whatsoever!" — "I know, but there are no posts available." — "I should have been satisfied with the humblest situation," said Clarence. "I could have . . ." he said. But what could he have done? Had he the least idea? "I could have been a simple drummer boy . . ."— "That is not a simple occupation," said the beggar. "The drummers are drawn from a noble caste and their employment is hereditary. Even if you had been allowed to beat a drum it would have had no meaning. The white men think they know everything, and what *do* they know, when all's said and done? Perhaps I should not have announced that you were ready to accept any kind of employment whatsoever, perhaps they were suspicious of a man who was ready to accept just *any* kind of employment, feeling that such a one would be incapable of doing anything."

Thus is the beginning of this European's education. He gets one lesson after the other, most of them painful. At a Law Court he is treated like Africans were at times treated at colonialist Law Courts: his evidence has no value and he cannot get justice. Only the beggar helps him on, his art of begging supplies enough food while they go South where the king is expected. Clarence does not see that they move on, he believes he is tricked, that they go the same way every day, so unchanged is the landscape to him, the forest that never ends. In a village Clarence does not want to go on, the beggar sells him there, getting a woman and a donkey for him. Clarence does not know that he has been sold, his life is comfortable, he is not supposed to work and gets a nice companion to sleep with him in his hut. But sometimes he has the impression that his woman is different, that the woman he has in the night is not his woman. He worries, he wants to find out though he is told that it is better for him not to know. But as a white man he cannot leave any secret untouched, he wants to know the truth. He finally finds out that he is used as a stallion to mate with

the wives of the naba, the chief. Knowing it, makes him more unhappy than before, seeing his pride in his white race reduced to nothing but a biological difference whimsically used by a naba to make his offspring look different from other offsprings.

Even his humanitarian ideals, his Christian pity is shown to be worthless and harmful. The Master of Ceremonies has done wrong in letting Clarence into the secret, and as a punishment the Master of Ceremonies gets whipped. Clarence attending the scene is torn by his conscience, mutters "Savages!" and stops the whipping. But not even the whipped Master of Ceremonies thanks him for his interference, because the Master of Ceremonies will enjoy no respite now. If the display had been allowed to pursue its rightful course, he would have been able really to enjoy the respite, the sense of relief that the conclusion of a well-regulated torture always affords. Whereas now he has to drag himself around as if he had never received a single stroke.

Clarence's preconceived ideas are altered, his prejudices torn. None of the persons who surround him is wholly reliable, but all are human, neither good nor bad but both.

Noaga and Nagoa, the two boys who accompany Clarence all the time, are neither good nor bad. At any time, they take their chance, they steal where there is an opportunity. Clarence is often worried about them, at times he is shocked, at times compelled to admire. They never consider life too seriously. There is no question whether they are to be redeemed by the king or not. "Tomorrow we go with the king", they say. Their redemption is not a question of good or evil, they cannot be rejected by the king, because already they live life as a unity. Clarence on the other hand can only be redeemed after he has learned that his moral problems are not essential. This is one of the strongest arguments against the Christian interpretation of the end of the book.

Clarence learns, and learns gradually to become one of those around him. human himself, humble at last when all his preconceptions are gone. It is again a smith, Diallo the blacksmith, who gives him the most worthy lessons. One morning he learns about the essence of African art when Diallo says:

"But what is an axe? I have forged thousands of them, and this one will undobutedly be the finest of them all; the others will have been no more than experiments I made in order to forge this one perfect axe. So this will be the sum of everything I have learnt; it will be like my life and all the effort I had made to live it well. But what does the king want with an axe? . . . He will accept it; at least I hope he will accept it; and perhaps he will even deign to admire it; but he will accept it and admire it only in order to give me pleasure After all what sort of pleasure could he take in it? There will always be axes that are finer and more deadly, more murderously sharp than any I can fashion . . . Yet I go on forging it. Perhaps I can do nothing else. perhaps I am like a tree which can bear only one kind of fruit. Yes I am like that tree... And perhaps, in spite of having so many faults, perhaps because I am like that tree and lack the means to do anything but this; in spite of everything, the king will give me credit for my good will... But as far as the axe itself..."

Thus not the purpose of the axe is important but its meaning. The process of creation is more important than the created object. In itself it is not worth much, its worth lasts as long as the artist creates it doing his best to justify his own life. And as soon as it is finished he starts to forge a new one, a better one again, and each one is the sum of everything he has ever learnt. And the former axes are destooled works of art, they are of no value to him, they become mere tools which the farmer may use now.

Finally Clarence is redeemed after he has learned that all his former scales of values are wrong. When finally he has learned to have visions, when he even

has understood that what he thought to be sin is not sin but life, that by all his errors there is nothing that really counts but his good will, then the king draws him to his breast. Like everything in this novel this king is a symbol too. He is fortune, merit, favour, mercy, he is king and redeemer. Camara Laye gives the sum of all religion, of all humanity in this novel. And he shows that here, finally, all religion is one. Various symbols of different religions are used to fuse them into a uniform concept of Religion.

Mr. Ramsaran sees the novel as a "strange mixture of two qualities, the sensual and the spiritual." But the sensual and the spiritual are one in African thinking. It is Clarence the European hero of the novel who separates the two. For Clarence the mixture is strange. He tries to split these forces, until he is redeemed and has learned that there is no split. Unity is not a final synthesis for Laye, it is the original state.

The end of the novel, often misunderstood, means that even the white man in Africa can be redeemed and accepted when he shows his good will to learn and not only to teach. And that Camara Laye in all his lessons does not consider the African way of faith and redemption the only one imaginable and superior. He wants to say that it is the only right way for Africa and that it is of equal value with any other way of mankind.

SYMBOLISM IN "THE RADIANCE OF THE KING"

BY J. A. **RAMSARAN**

I find Mr. Jahn's interpretation of Camara Laye's novel most interesting though not entirely convincing.. His close study of African life obviously gives him an advantage over any reader with no knowledge of African thought. But I would suggest with due deference to his experience of things African that he is perhaps a little uncritical about what he calls "African thinking" when he implies that such a philosophy is common to all Africans and that Monsieur Laye has written a novel the meaning and implications of which he himself was conscious of all the time even before he set pen to paper. When Mr. Jahn says that the book is "ambivalent, even multivalent" I am in perfect agreement with him if he will admit that the ambivalence derives from the author's own search for self-knowledge, his own questionings of both European and African values as they appear to the twentieth century intellectual of either culture; for the African intellectual is as much a "split" personality as his European counterpart, is as much in need of integration on a different level from the unity that obtains, if it does obtain, in the unsophisticated African society.

Camara Laye, sensitive and percipient, has realised with the acuteness of a poet that mankind as a whole is suffering from a spiritual malaise and that a nostalgia for what seems a lost innocence infects the intellectuals of today. *The Radiance of the King* is Monsieur Laye's expression of this awareness in a work which is like all art "multivalent" — it can mean several things the author himself might not have been conscious of when he embarked on the novel; it disturbs, it excites, it holds out some promise of a vision that will explain the mystery of our being: but it does not fulfil that promise. Mr. Jahn seems to think it does, but I am still not sure athough his interpretation helps me in the enjoyment of the novel.

GEORGE LAMMING

BY HELMUT GUNTER

In a German newspaper I read an essay of the English writer, Harold Champion, entitled "The West Indies — A Growing Nation". It says: "On the 22nd of April 1958 Princess Margaret opened the first Federal Parliament of the West Indian Federation. On this day a constitution passed into law that closely resembled the previous constitution of the individual islands and even the constitution of Great Britain itself. The islands Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Monserrat, Antigua, St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago have formed a new state. A long development was needed to achieve this degree of political maturity on the islands." The article gives an exact outline of the political structure of the new state. But nothing is said about the people and their culture. For the author the West Indian Federation is just an English speaking part of the British Commonwealth. In reality this is a state of Indians, Chinese and above all, black people. It is an Afro-American state. The people of these islands have achieved a new spiritual and political confidence. Their culture is already influencing the rest of the world.

The wave of calypso music that has recently swept over the world is only the harbinger of the cultural encounter between the West Indies and the rest of the world. Music and dancing, the most basic and human of all the arts, usually come first. Afro-American culture first effected the western world through jazz, then through Afro-Cuban music, the tango and the rumba. Since 1940 literature from the West Indies is making its mark. At this moment the islands are becoming part of world culture.

One of the most important representatives of West Indian literature is George Lamming, who was born in 1927 on Barbados. He writes in English. English is his mother tongue. He is a film and book critic on the BBC and his novels have appeared with the London publisher Michael Joseph.

English critics see in Lamming a sort of phenomenon. They praise his new vision (which is in reality very ancient), the power of his language, the richness of his poetic imagination. From a European point of view Lamming is indeed something new and strange: both a volcano and a source of lyrical fairy tales, Lamming writes a magnificent English, the kind of English that has not been written since Francis Thompson, whose poem "The Hound of Heaven" he once quotes. But Lamming does not really belong to English literature; but to those Afro-American authors in whom the African spirit has rediscovered itself. Lamming is a product of the highest contemporary education. He has absorbed Faulkner and Sartre. He also knows the French surrealists. But the wealth of his imagery has nothing to do with surrealism. His images have not been stuck together artificially; they form a whole and spring from a common source. The agitated world of Lamming's novels is not the arbitrary, torn world of civilization. In Lamming we find the whole world, and for Lamming the world is a whole. Everything is related to everything else. For Lamming, therefore, there is no such thing as absolute freedom; freedom is ecstasy and bliss; and means to be part of a whole, to be receptive to the breath of the world.

It is true that Lamming fights against suppression and colonialism, and for

the political and social freedom of his people. He is a rebel and a nationalist. But political freedom is only a means to achieve the great freedom of man as such.

In the novel "Of Age and Innocence" the black writer Mark says:

"Nationalism is not only frenzy and struggle for the destruction of those forces which condemn you to the status we call colonial. The national spirit is deeper than that. It is the private feeling you experience of possessing and being possessed by the whole landscape of the place where you were born, the freedom which helps you to recognise the rhythm of the winds, the silence and aroma of the night, rocks, water, . . . the temper of the sea and the mornings arousing nature everywhere to the silent and sacred communion between you and the roots you have made in this island... And the freedom you sing... freedom . . . " (Page 174).

Lamming is an important novelist, because he is a modern individual and at the same time lives as part of all things and all forces. African culture has comprehended what is the supreme happiness of man. The basis of African culture is the dance; the mysterious union of ecstasy and form, of ego and world, the experience of the great freedom. Lamming has once described the happiness and freedom of the dance in the following words:

"There was only the body which was the dance itself, regulated, informed. nourished and dictated not only by its blood, but by some pervasive, measureless source of being that was its own logic of receptivity and transmission, a world that could be defined only through the presence of others, yet remained in its definition absolute, free, itself. The body was part of the source of its being and at the same time its being. It was within and outside itself simultaneously. Free, yet subject to the compulsion of its freedom, it strained beyond the limit of its resources." (The Emigrants).

Humanity and love are the powers behind any kind of poetry. That is why Lamming is both rebel and dreamer, politician and poet, like all the great modern African poets. (Césaire and Senghor, for example.) The poet is the voice of world *and* of man. Politics and poetry are one and the same thing for Lamming. Politics creates the space in which man can be a human being, that is a free being that is in contact with all the forces of the world. Politics without religious and poetic roots is meaningless. But poetry without topical human and social reference is empty. If we separate poetry and politics in the following we merely show two sides of the same thing.

THE THEME: POLITICS.

Lamming's theme is of extraordinary simplicity: It is West Indies and England, black and white. Lamming describes the rise of his people. His novels form a trilogy. In his first book "In the Castle of my Skin" (1953), Lamming describes his childhood: a legendary world, mythical, biblical without a sense of history. On the one side the feudal landlords, on the other the black people who own nothing but the fairy tales, the myths, and the biblical hope:

"Like children under the threat of hell fire they accepted instinctively that the others, meaning the white, were superior . . . This world of the others' imagined perfection hung like a dead weight over their energy. If the low-down nigger people weren't what they are, the others couldn't say anything about us. Suspicion, distrust, hostility."

But already there is lightening on the horizon: unrest, strikes, first political leaders. The War opens the eyes of the black people. Up till then they had been ashamed to be black. But a man who had emigrated to the United States brings home the new message: the message of the great Jamaican M. Garvey who proclaimed the unity of the African peoples. He is the first man on the island who speaks of black men as "My people, the negro race..." But he had to emigrate to discover himself.

The second novel, "The Emigrants", describes the mass migration of West Indians to London. They seek their fortune there. They know no hatred against

white people. England is their hope, their dream. Barbados has always been proud to be called "Little England".

Barbados or Little England was the oldest and purest of England's children, and may it always be so. One day before time changed for eternity, Little England and Big England, God's anointed on earth, might hand-in-hand rule this earth ... Big England had only to say the word and Little England followed. Big England had the strongest navy, and Little England the best fishermen in this God's world. Together they were mistresses of the sea, and whenever, wherever, the two met on the same side, war or peace, there was bound to be a victory."

England is the big friend, the educator, the helper. The coloured West Indians want nothing but understanding and love. England is their rightful heritage. England, oh England! But England turns out to be the enemy. England, oh England? They live in caves and holes under the ground, but they do not give up their hope. They have ceased to look for England now. They want to discover themselves. What they are really looking for is not merely material fortune, but recognition as human beings. Thus England becomes merely a diversion on the road home; it becomes the school in which they are taught to prove that they are West Indians and want to be West Indians. That is why they don't give up. There is a conversation between the emigrants on the boat. Somebody says:

"West Indies people, whatever island you bring them from, them want to prove something ..... Me serve in the R.A.F. three years, an' de only thing that West Indians in de R.A.F. dint want to prove, de only thing him feel no need to prove is his capability wid a bottle or a blonde .... In everything else, him feelin', him searching. An' if you ask what it is them want to prove the answer sound a stupid answer. Them want to prove that them is themself. Them is West Indians."

Lamming's third novel, "Of Age and Innocence", is located on an island called San Cristobal. The name is invented but the island is real enough. The coloured people on this island, negroes and Indians are fighting for victory. The world has changed radically. The old people, particularly the mothers, are still living in a world of dreams, of legend and the Bible. But the two men who are the real heroes of the book have just returned from England. They have both lost contact with their people. Mark, the black writer, has experienced the isolation and solitude of the modern European. The woman he loves is English. After twenty years of absence he is returning home: and here at last he rediscovers his identity, his objective existence. In the same way Shepherd, who becomes hero and saviour of his people, was driven into politics only by the disappointment of a "white" love. Colonial rule is coming to an end. Its last weapons are terror and murder. Shepherd arouses his people to "a new conception of itself". (p. 85) Now everything is Politics. The individual fate of the various characters is tragic. The last chapters tell of violence and fear, of death and tombs. Shepherd is dead. The bayonets and the tanks rule once more. There is a state of war. But the young generation will continue the fight and the victory is certain.

THE POET AND THE WORLD OF IMAGES

Lamming writes novels, but he is not a novelist in the European sense of the word. Of course he describes an historical world that is fixed in space and time and he has action. In "Of Age and Innocence" he even has a sort of plot. There are quite realistic scenes and discussions, very many in fact. But Lamming is never satisfied to merely tell a story and to copy reality. He does not merely want to report, he wants to conjure the world in words, like a true African. In European terms, Lamming is an epic and a lyrical writer and a novelist all at once. He is an excellent story teller. His books abound with humourous anec-

dotes and tense adventures. He can tell real thrillers with murder and flight. He can also create the individual fate of his various characters with great mastery. But these individual characters are merely parts of an all embracing lyrical-epic world. That is why the author must again and again break through the framework of realistic prose. Lamming fully masters the technique of the modern novel. But he knows that in this way he can only touch the surface of the world. What he really wants is to conjure the world in its entirety in pictures. In pictures he reveals the unity of the world, the interrelationship of all things. That is why Lamming's language is often heightened into poetry, for example in the description of Paddington Station in London. That is why Lamming's most beautiful characters are the mothers who are still living in myths and images. In the novel "In the Castle of my Skin" there is Ma, the oldest woman on the island. But the most beautiful of all Lamming's characters is that other Ma, the pious mother of the rebel Shepherd. All these women carry on an unhistorical existence being part of the whole. Their language is therefore always poetical and mythical and conjuring in the African sense.

"Their language seemed to give everything the sound of ritual, and there was no end of ritual in San Cristobal." ("Of Age and I. p. 85) Pa and Ma ("In the Castle of my Skin") speak in biblical language about the first leader of the island. Thus says Ma:

> "Seems to me you see Yuh salvation in Mr. Slime. He's get a chance to go to Yuh head like rum to a next man's an now you hear the shout you can't think or say nothing that aint bound up with him. But I tell you already, an I 'tell you again, I wont store no riches here on the earth, Pa. I wont store no riches here where we see when we least expecting flood, famine an all the pest' lence that God flict the earth with. It aint no place to store riches, Pa." (Page 87).

Or listen to this old fisherman:

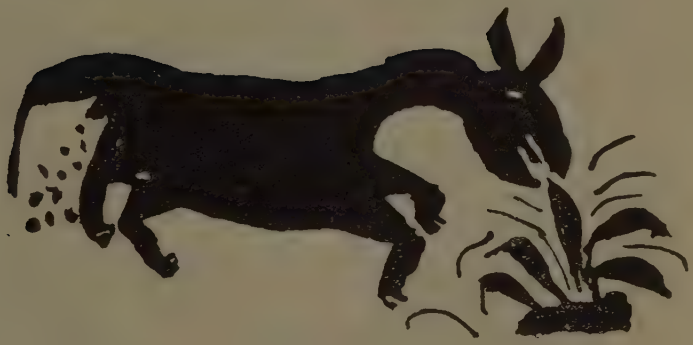
> "I enter the ocean at an early age, a strip of a boy beside my father, helpin' to raid the fish of the sea, all class of fish in every kind of sea-water. No fish none of you can name that I din't down with harpoon or hook or haul flyin' in with these said same hands you see here . . . . Night and day is two sides of the same coin, one side maybe is heads, the next side maybe tails, but the same coin, an' 'tis the same with every man who chase fish, maybe 'tis nightlight, maybe 'tis daylight, but there's only one time, that's fishing time."

That is the world, the language, the poetry, from which Lamming has come Even for him, the modern intellectual, the world is still mythical and magical, a world of images and secret relationships. Everything is alive, full of divine power. The boldest example is perhaps in "The Emigrants". There he says of the newly gained freedom of a young colonial:

"I felt this freedom. It was a private and personal acquisition, and I used it as a man uses what is private and personal, like his penis."

For the true poet, who thinks in images and in contexts there is nothing individual, nothing separate. The world is a stream of powers. Lamming does not merely give a series of images, nor does he merely draw on the African mythical world of the mothers, but his novels move on in large general images into which the individual characters have been woven. The progress of time is expressed through the change of images in space. Time is expressed through space. Space and time thus appear as the manifestations of a single living force. Even the human beings, who are acting in this time-space, are cosmic forces, who are endowed with spirit and freedom. But a plot that progresses merely in time, can never exist in Lamming's work. Because a plot dissolves the unity of the world into single actions and moments. Lamming always presents large images. Within these images there is no chronological progression of action.

Always an entire world is presented — the ship, or London, — a world in which everything forms a unity. Even modern London becomes in Lamming's work a magical space, a space in which everything is united by basic links. A separate individual action cannot exist here. The action is jerky. But the unity of space and time is never destroyed. Of course, even in Lamming's novels the different images must succeed each other in time. But that merely follows from the technique to which every writer is subjected. A painter, like Picasso, can represent the different aspects of a subject and a picture simultaneously. The writer must present a sequence of time and space. But Lamming tries again and again to dovetail the different images and scenes in order to create the impression of a uniform, compact world. Past and present overlap. All spaces in the world are simultaneous. Everything is eternal, in the same time and the same space. This is just like the poetry of the great contemporary negro poets, for example Césaire. Everything is ever present. The poet is master of the world and at the same time its smallest part. In Lamming's work, therefore, the political fight in time is "a great and extreme change" but in reality everything amounts to a return to the deepest sources of the world. For the Afro-American writer Lamming, poetry is politics and politics is poetry. That is why he can live simultaneously in the most modern forms of modern civilization, and in the age old myths and images of his Afro-American homeland.



FOUR SPIRITUALS

BY FRANK MARTINUS ARION

transl. from the Dutch by Estelle Debrot

I hear the stampers and rattling gourds
these stampers, this sound
of a hundred feet, these gourds
this tamtam, tamtam, o this tamtam
of these stampers, these stampers
long after my eyes are closed
in the shivering dance of death
these stampers will stamp
grind food, cassavas and corn:
long after my eyes are closed
in the shivering dance of death
these stampers will stamp
I'll stay here, on this beach
I'll stay here, on this beach
Stampers stamp
tamtams tam
gourds rattle
still in the shivers of my death.

I am invited for the feast
soon to take place up there
for the feast in heaven
I am invited
I am invited for the feast
for the feast I am invited
I may sit at the banquet
I may sit at the banquet
for the big feast I am invited
the feast with black angels all around
O I am invited to be a guest
at the feast up there in heaven
but I have lost the invitation
that invitation I have lost
black angels are waiting for me in vain
they wait for me in vain
they await me in vain

I need so very little
so little that counts
to go on living
but before that little
that hardly counts
reaches me from far horizons
I'll have collapsed like a skyscraper
before that little that does not count
is placed into my hands
from the hand of a creature
I'll be a rotting palm
deep in the swamp.

I need so very little
to live in the world that's lost.
but that very little
I'll probably never live to see
I'll remain a guide for others,
who go the way I show
That very little
I'll never live to see.

Believe me I'm made of mischief
my creator is most mischievous
just yesterday I went out
with words to seek
him and his creation
I threw the words up
hard as stones
but today they come clattering
down upon my own head
not even the leaves
have fallen
not even the trees
have been struck with all my words
not even the clouds
not even the winds
they hover over me
clatter down on my head
and become wounds, wounds
Believe me I'm made of mischief
my creator is mischievous.

BOOK REVIEWS

DOWN SECOND AVENUE
by Ezekiel Mphahlele. Faber & Faber, 1959
Price 18/-.

Ezekiel Mphahlele's autobiography is at once a personal anecdote and a social comment, a factual statement and cry from the heart. The thirty seven years of life of one black South African, it is the memoir of an individual and the story of thousands of the stifled coloured people of his country.

Mr. Mphahlele is a writer of considerable ability possessing a fluent ease that makes absorbing reading. He gives a vivid and realistic description of urban South Africa; the vitality of the African slum, the misery of poverty and overcrowding, the brutality of the police and yet in spite of all, the vigour and resilience of the African character are revealed through the incidents of childhood with startling clarity.

"The water trickled down into tin containers. It seemed an age waiting for a four-gallon tin to fill up. More and more people came to wait, the queue got longer, stretching down in snaky fashion. A few of us small boys were also in the queue.

"It trickled into a bucket, or a dish, and the queue grew longer, not able to hear itself any more. You could hear a click of the tongue from the many souls waiting there; a click of helpless disgust and impatience. A pilgrimage at a communal water tap. It was like this in Second Avenue, you knew it must be like that at every communal tap in Marabastad.

"Sometimes the people quarrelled, then they laughed, then they eavesdropped and they gossiped. Some sat on their tins. One or two suckled their babies while they waited. The tins filled up at their own good time.

"'Tck, tck, so much water in the seas, but none in Marabastad,' said someone. Another tightened her large jaws and clapped her hands and clasped them behind as if to say, 'Wait and despair'. And you knew she had a capacity for waiting.

"Time ran out with the same slow, relentless and painful flow of tap water. If you watched the water long enough, it gave the illusion that it was running out faster. But the illusion soon passed. We all waited with dry patience. Often I imagined the Leshoana river running down Second Avenue. With more water than we could ever need. I thought of those abundant springs on the mountain side. Sitting on my tin, I might dose off and dream of the torrents of rain in northern Transvaal. Rains that came down with a fierce purpose and made you so wet that you didn't bother to stop to urinate: you just let off while you walked."

Buffeted as he is by the government doctrine of white supremacy, Mphahlele's reaction is emotional and he draws the slights, the humiliations, the terror into himself as a personal hurt too deep to reason with. He cannot detach himself from his experience: he experiences with his emotions and this, coupled with his acute power of observation, his eye for humour and pathos give a hint of an agile creative writer. Aware that in South Africa he was mentally crippled by the fight for survival, he finally departs with his family to West Africa in the search for freedom to think. Born under a different star, Mphahlele would never have taken the political stance into which he was driven, but by virtue of his skin even acquiring an education — which he did with distinction — resolves itself into a political struggle.

The young Ezekiel's story is the individual intimate example which complements the thousands in Father Trevor Huddleston's political and Christian cry of protest "Naught for your Comfort"; he fulfills Father Huddleston's hopes for African youth by his academic prowess, and his fears by abandoning the Christian faith. As a tale of childhood and of a unique society in Africa *Down Second Avenue* makes fascinating reading; as a measure of human beings outraged it cannot fail to move the least committed reader to compassion and a deep and lasting anger and a thankfulness that he was not born into that part of Africa where, by the chance of birth, he is either oppressed or oppressor.

By its personal appeal, the book will reach a wide and general reading public and the author renders a great service to his people in increasing the amount of informed opinion abroad. He is

at the same time becoming an important name in the literary world, and his future work will be anticipated with the greatest interest.

Diana Speed.

THE HIT by Julian Mayfield.

Michael Joseph, 1959. Price 13/6.

By comparison with the negro in Johannesburg, the negro in New York's Harlem lives a paradisal existence. Nevertheless, in *The Hit*, a light novel written by an American negro about American negroes, a very clear impression of his defensive attitude is given. He anticipates every insult and resists authority in order to defend the honour of his black skin. The plot is of little consequence but the character studies are excellent. The author gets inside the mind of each of his characters in turn and they really live as entities, each with his share of meanness, honesty, selfishness and stoicism brought out not just in a patterned set of actions but in the thinking that takes place during the course of an ordinary working day.

The pathetic little Hubert warped by his obsession to win big money, the silly ineffectual woman on whom he depends to complete his dream and his weary steadfast wife present the state of mind of middle aged existence against which the feckless taxi-driver son and his girl open up a wider, shifting picture of the youth and bustle of city life.

The conflicts and struggles are of a working-class community; the flavour is American rather than negro and the controversies are not of colour but of humanity and the universal personal problems of ordinary people in an urban setting.

"Noon eased itself into the Manhattan streets. The sun hung high over Harlem, and its heat was heavy as a white cloak over the flat roofs and the grey streets. Children sought the coolness of dark basements and dank hallways. The old people sat near their windows and looked with indifference out on to the shimmering streets. Behind the lunch counters brown girls and yellow girls, irritated by the heat and their own perspiration, grouchily served up frankfurters with sauerkraut, hot sausages with mustard and relish and onion, milk shakes, malteds, coffee, and orange juice; served these to impatient clerks and labourers and helpers' helpers, to shoppers, policemen, and hack drivers. Preachers napped and dreamed of churches larger than the Abbyssinian. Lawyers and petty real-estate brokers planned and schemed and gamblers figured. Madame Lawson shuffled her cards, Madame Fatima stared into her silver crystal ball, and turbaned Abdul Ben Said of the ebony skin mumbled an incantation to the black gods of old, and lo! all of them saw glory in the morning if not sooner. There, near the top of Manhattan Island, Harlem sizzled and baked and groaned and rekindled its dream under the midday sun."

It is a book about people and as such it is convincing. It is pleasing to read with many humourous touches, and written in an easy style of English with a minimum of American slang and tough talk.

Mr. Mayfield is already known as actor and playwright but this is his first novel, and published while he is still only thirty years old, shows promise of a bright future.

Diana Speed.

THINGS FALL APART

by Chinua Achebe Heinemann 15/-

"Things Fall Apart" tells of how the new came to replace the old in the village of Umuofia. On the one hand, the Old, with its colour, its deep meaning, its poetry, its immanence and its intimate ring; on the other, the inevitable change: the creeping overgrowth of a functional New.

Chinua Achebe's powerful gift of narration brought out the harshness of some of the old usage along with the beauty and charm of the fading traditional way of life.

With equal impartiality and graciousness he described the benefits, as well as the hollowness, of the white man's ways which missionaries and colonial adventurers had offered in place of the old.

There is something refreshingly new in this Achebe's first novel. It is not just another well-written book: a spokesman of the publishers and many of the book's readers consider it the best which has come out of West Africa. It is certainly an intriguing piece of creative work, the full appreciation of the merits of which will only come with time.

The theme of the novel is the kind which, while having a clearly recognizable local setting, breaks loose from its place limits. It is West African; it is African; and yet it is even more universal than that. The Ibo village of the story might well be any village of rural Africa

And the conflicts of cultures are universal and timeless.

The occult forces which are at work in our various communities—the beliefs, fears, social customs, religious rites — all this formed the raw material with which the story is woven.

The flow of the story resembles that of Camara Laye's "The Dark Child". The tenor of the narration is unhurried. One might liken the flow to the running of a river along a gentle undulating African parkland: pleasing but unobstrusive landscape; gurgling wavelets around rocks on the river-bed, but no rapids; surprises here and there, but no promontories of tense excitement. The climax: the emptying of the river into the sea.

A sense of drama is achieved by the interplay of conflicts of interest in terms of human situations and opposing philosophies of life.

The canvas is narrow; and the actors in the story are few; unlike the panoramic canvas and the galaxy of actors in French and Russian novels.

The finely drawn characters in "Things Fall Apart" were done with sympathy and humanity. The reader is made to like and to identify himself with them. The women are tender and graceful; the children sweet; and the male characters are honest to goodness.

Mother-child relationship is intimate, confidential and affectionate. The dialogues between Ezinma and her mother, Ekwena, are among the loveliest you can find anywhere. Frankly, Ekwefia imparts to Ezinma knowledge about propriety, sex, domestic accomplishments and the world around through folk-lore, proverbs and coded concepts in the form of taboos.

Okonkwo, the central character in the story, has been sharply projected: a gaunt man of title, self-made, proud, violent; a man of action who was the best wrestler in his day. Though tender and kind of heart he thought it unmanly to show soft emotion. He was fearful of failure and spiteful of the weak and the poor such as his father had been before him.

The title of the book was derived from W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming": " . . . Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold . . . "

The story opened with life in a dynamic and vibrant village — one of seven villages. The cycles of the market week, the farming seasons, the harvest ceremonies, marriage, birth and death rites came and went. The woods and the hills, and the spirits which inhabit them — each had its apportioned role and place. The ancestral gods interfered little, so long as their biddings were obeyed.

But, this placid life was not to be for longer. The inexhorable wheels of Time and Change. harbingered by a white man on "an iron horse", would not let it be. This first visitor with a bleached skin for whom the villagers had an utmost contempt was killed. The visit and the killing were what brought disaster in their train. The rest is present history.

The tragedy of Okonkwo's destruction was but a personnification of the collapse of tribal life. He, the man, who carved his own destiny, and whose palm-kernels were not "cracked for him by a benevolent spirit", was hurled to catastrophe as much by his own folly as by the alien forces over which he had no control.

Achebe, again like Camara Laye, is a man of scholarship. He knows and uses English with consummate skill. To this is added an inherited knack for story telling with which Africans are endowed. His language has the ring and rhythm of poetry. At the background of the words can be heard the thrumming syncopation of the sounds of Africa — the gongs, the drums, the castanets and the horns. You can hear the metal gong: gome! gome! gome! and Ekwe, the hollowed-out wooden instrument: go-di-di-go-go-di-go!

The writer lets untranslatable words explain themselves, e.g., obi (a hut, a husband's bedroom, symbol of authority in a village compound), chi (the undying essence of man, the ego, the soul, one's personal fate, all in one).

Proverbs, which according to Ibos, "are the palm-oil with which words are eaten", stand out as gems on a string of beads in Achebe's prose. Of the hankering after the days of youth which old men and women feel on starry nights he quoted an Ibo proverb: "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk."

Sentences like: "the faint and distant wailing of women settled like a sediment of sorrow on the earth" give one a feeling as when one walks through a cool stream on a hot day. Achebe does not say "when the heat of the sun abated"; he says, "when the heat of the sun began to soften." Okonkwo, tired and forlorn, is described as "a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito."

When comments on the content and the style of the book have been exhausted, its intangible beauty remains. Some may call it the magic;

others the halo, the aroma, the charm, or the unanalyzable quintessence which binds everything together in harmony and unity.

G. Adali Mortty.

THE LION AND THE JEWEL and THE SWAMP DWELLERS, two plays by Wole Soyinka performed at the Arts Theatre, University College Ibadan, Nigeria, by the Students Dramatic Society, February 1959.

This first performance of two African plays at University College Ibadan was really an important event in the literary history of West Africa. West Africans have produced quite a few novelists so far, and a large number of poets, but all attempts at serious drama, even in the French territories have been rather immature. There has evolved in recent years a tradition of musical plays, mostly in the vernacular, some of them extremely valuable, but there had not been any drama in the Western sense at all. Now here at last is a young West African dramatist of promise.

There may be a lot to criticise in these first two plays, but one feels nevertheless to be in the presence of a born dramatist. Wole Soyinka has an instinct for the stage and the dramatic situation. He can create convincing characters and he has a superb sense of humour. His language has wit and sparkle, and is often poetic.

THE LION AND THE JEWEL is a hilarious comedy about a proud young village girl, Sidi, who is finally brought to fall. Sidi is wooed by the school master, who talks to her of romantic love and other things he considers "civilized" — but all this is lost on Sidi who merely wonders why he has failed to produce the dowry if he is so keen to marry her. His attempts to kiss her she finds repulsive: "I tell you I dislike this strange unhealthy mouthing you perform."

The schoolmaster with his muddled ideas about "civilization" is a tragicomic figure. He does not really know what he is talking about, yet he feels infinitely superior to the "bush" people in the village, to whom he announces the inevitable coming of "progress":

> Within a year or two, I swear,
> This village shall be civilized.
> Bride price shall be a thing forgot
> And wives shall take their place by men.
> A motor road will pass this spot
> And bring the foreign ways to us
> The men will dress in city suits
> And women paint their lips in red.
> No man shall take more wife than one
> That's why they're impotent so soon.
> The ruler shall possess a car
> Or a bicycle at the very least.
> We'll burn the forest, cut the trees
> Then plant a modern park for lovers.
> We'll print newspapers every day
> With pictures of seductive girls.
> The world will judge our beauty contests.
> ....
> We must be Christian in our lives
> Or they will call us primitive.

And so he goes on and on — the only trouble is that nobody will listen to him. He and Sidi talk at cross purposes. Sidi has always been dubious about the schoolmaster's advances. Now she decides to discard him, because her picture, taken by a travelling European, has appeared on a magazine cover. She leaps to sudden fame in the village as a result of this. Even the aged chief, the lion of the village now desires to marry her. But Sadiku, elated by the fame of her beauty spurns him:

> Compare my image and your lord's —
> An age of difference!
> See how the water glistens on my face.
> Like the dew moist leaves on a morn of Harmattan.
> But he — his face is like a leather piece
> Torn rudely from the saddle of his horse.
> .....
> I am the twinkle of a jewel
> But he is the hindquarters of a lion!

Baroka the chief schemes how to get his own back on her.... but we must not give away the plot. THE LION AND THE JEWEL is a very successful play. The author keeps his audience laughing all the way through and he manages to give his plot a number of surprising turns, that keep the audience in suspense. There is no hero and no villain in this play, but all the characters are successfully ridiculed and made fun of.

THE SWAMP DWELLERS is a more ambitious play. While THE LION AND THE JEWEL is content with making a humourous comment on village life, the SWAMP DWELLERS purports to be a play with a message. Unfortunately the "message" gets swamped half way through the play in a series of confused emotions.

The play is set in the Niger delta and its superb opening scene shows Makuri and Alu an ageing couple. They are worried about their son Igwezu who has just returned from the city, but has gone out to the swamps and keeps late returning. They converse with each other in a nagging tone, but underneath all the bickering a very great affection and attachment are beautifully and subtly suggested. Footsteps are heard, but it is not the son entering, but an

unexpected visitor from the North: a blind beggar. The introduction of the Moslem Hausaman into the world of the swamps is dramatically very effective. He being a complete outsider, can make detached but significant comments on the emotional tie up of the people of the swamp into whose society he has suddenly entered. But this possibility is only sparingly exploited by the author. Instead the beggar is used to introduce some strange symbolism. He is a beggar with a vision of a new life. He is no longer content to live on alms — in fact he queries the age old religious institutions that make him, the afflicted, a sacred person. He has decided to become a farmer, he believes that his suffering hands have acquired a special power to wring life from the soil. So he has wandered from the far North, following the river. Now he has reached the end of his journey. He has reached the swamps, no man can go beyond this point. So here he must settle and start his new life. The blind beggar is an impressive figure, in his earnest insistence on his "new life". But unfortunately his ideas do not prove very relevant to the plot of the play.

A far less successful character is Igwezu, the son. Igwezu has returned from the city, where he has been pursued by bad luck. He lost his money and his wife, who has been seduced by his own twin brother, who is a successful businessman and pitiless towards his brother. In desperation he has borrowed money from his wicked brother, giving as security the harvest of his farm in his native village. He comes home to claim his crop — but discovers that the rains have destroyed all the crops that year. Igwezu indulges in a lot of sentimental, self-pitying talk, about the wickedness and loneliness of town life. But all his hatred is suddenly turned against the village priest the "Kadiye". With a somewhat primitive logic he reasons that the Kadiye has let him down. Did he not bring all the sacrifices, as prescribed by the priest to the "Great Serpent" the deity of the swamps? Why then did the rains not stop? Is it not because the Kadiye was corrupt, and fattened himself on the sacrifices? The Kadiye finally appears to announce that the rains have finally stopped and that he can now have his beard shaved off at last; for he had vowed not to shave until the floods subsided. Igwezu is asked to shave the Kadiye. Razor in hand he now insults the priest in a rather melodramatic scene. He reproaches him as being an impostor and he threatens to kill him. The priest is finally released and he retreats cursing. Igwezu draws the conclusion that he can no longer live in the village. He must return to the city, even if life there is hard and corrupt, it is *his* life. The beggar wishes to follow him, but is told to stay behind and look after the farm.

The clash between Igwezu and the Kadiye seems to stand for the conflict between city and village life, between "progress" and "tradition". But the author has deflated the potential dramatic situation by turning the Kadiye into a grotesque caricature of a priest — the only clown in a group of deadly serious characters. By exposing the Kadiye, therefore, Igwezu has proved nothing — except that the village needs another Kadiye. If Igwezu had returned from the city to find the traditions of his village completely intact, if he had found the Kadiye a sincere man, who interpreted the ancient myths that explain man's relationship to the divine forces of the universe — then there would have been a genuine conflict situation. Because however great the wisdom and the beauty of the Kadiye's world might be, it would no longer be acceptable to Igwezu.

But instead of giving us a confrontation of two ways of life, the author has given us a sentimental hero and a grotesque villain, thus turning his poetic play into a melodrama.

Tribute must be paid to the performances of the students of University College Ibadan, who fully rose to the occasion. These were the best students' performances seen so far in the University. Geoffrey Axworthy's production did full justice to the poetic possibilities of THE SWAMP DWELLERS, and succeeded in creating a truly enchanting atmosphere.

Sangodare Akanji.

TO SIR, WITH LOVE. by E. R. Braithwaite 1959

This charming book about a school in the East End of London, is written by a negro from British Guyana. Mr. Braithwaite describes how he drifted into teaching not because of a sense of vocation, but because of the necessity of finding a job. Though he is a trained scientist, no industry seemed willing to employ a coloured man immediately after the war. To the author this discrimination came as a great shock. Like most West Indians he had believed all his life in the "British way of life" and had come to look upon England as his home. His war service in the Royal Air Force had left his ideals completely intact. People seemed to see only his

uniform and not the colour of his skin during those days. Then, when he was demobilized, everything seemed to change. Firms badly in need of qualified men refused to employ him. Landladies looking for lodgers pretended their rooms had already been taken. There were little insults in buses, in restaurants — people seemed quite unpredictable. Confused and embittered he came to the conclusion that "all the big talk of democracy and human rights seemed as spurious as the glib guarantee with which some manufacturers underwrite their products in the confident hope that they will never be challenged."

But Mr. Braithwaite never allows bitterness to get the better of him. He has far too human and warm a personality, and his whole attitude to life is much too positive. Moreover, in spite of his disappointments his belief in traditional British values remains unshaken.

Having tried in vain to find a job in his own profession, he is finally persuaded to become a teacher. He is employed by the LCC and his first assignment is a school in the East End of London. It is a tough job, even for an experienced teacher. The children have a very low academic standard. They come from unstable homes and they are aggressive and tend towards delinquency. The author is at first bewildered by the school and the children. He brings with him very "British" and middle class attitudes. He has very rigid ideas of what is "proper" and "respectable". And naturally he is at first shocked by the children. But his humanity is always stronger than his attitudes and soon he begins to understand these children and to love them. He becomes completely involved in his new job. While at first he had started to teach merely to earn a living, teaching and the children now become the contents of his life. His description of how he slowly gains the children's confidence and affection makes fascinating reading and is most touching.

Mr. Braithwaite is an excellent storyteller. His language has neither the powerful individualism of Lamming, nor the colourful charm of Selvon, but he certainly knows how to bring his characters to life. Right from the first page one is enchanted—his description of a group of cockney charwomen in a London bus is a real gem. The teachers and above all the children are drawn with great sympathy and understanding. Every single character of the book is convincing. But the most likeable of the all the characters that emerge of the autobiographical novel is that of the author himself: very sincere, full of sympathy and enthusiasm, and irresistably charming.

Sangodare Akanji.

ONE MAN ONE WIFE by T. M. Aluko
Nigerian Printing and Publishing Co. Lagos 1959

In a country that has only produced two novels the arrival of the third is indeed a great event. In this case it is particularly exciting, because it is the first novel published by a Nigerian publisher! It is unfortunate, therefore, that the novel is extremely disappointing.

The book describes the conflict between Christians and "heathens" in a Yoruba village community. The story is packed with incident and action. There are marriages and divorces and abductions. Court cases, violence, disease. Somebody is struck dead by thunder, people die of small-pox, one man turns mad. The only connecting link in all this confusion of action is the struggle of the Christians to assert themselves in a community that is "steeped in the worship of streams and tree." In the end one of the characters, Jacob, becomes a prophet and reveals to the villagers his vision of the new life. Through him Christ finally triumphs over the "idol worshippers".

The author leaves us in no doubt where his sympathies lie. Any reference to traditional religion is clothed in abusive language! The Shango priest is said to put on his "juju apron". The worshippers sing "weird" songs. The priest of Shonponna is carrying on a "weird and unintelligible one way conversation with Shonponna." Yoruba religion is defined as the "worship of idols and trees". The chief is described as an "indolent old potentate". Marriage is defined as the "purchase of a woman", while the purpose of marriage is alleged to be the satisfaction of the "cravings of the flesh". The most sensationalist European traveller could not have used more abusive language to describe what is after all one of the greatest cultures of West Africa.

Mr. Aluko's harangue against the "pagans" is based on complete ignorance of the facts. He uses imperialist vocabulary, like "juju" and "idol". These words have no descriptive value at all, they have no meaning in Yoruba religion, they should in fact be scrapped from the West African vocabulary.

It is easy to prove Mr. Aluko wrong on a number of details. Shango is *not* the Yoruba

creator God, as is suggested once. When thunder strikes, people do not call out "Shango" but "Kabiyesi!" Completely absurd is the statement: "The God Shango hated familiarity, even in his own priests." If the author had ever attended a Sango ceremony he would have seen a great deal of familiarity. One laughs with Shango; one drinks with him; one can even abuse him. I have often heard some old women say something like this: "You ragged old fellow; I am angry with you. You have not given me another child as I asked you. I am going to find myself a new husband. What shall I do with an old fellow like you!" Such joking abuse is common, particularly in Shango worship. But Mr. Aluko has obviously never attended a Yoruba ceremony. In his book he describes church services and revival meetings, but we are not shown a single *Yoruba* ceremony. Shango is abused; but we do not see his priests dancing and performing their incredible tricks on the market place. We are not shown a single throwing of kola nuts, we do not experience a single sacrifice. In fact the author once refers to the "slaughtering of dogs" to Ogun. Yorubas never slaughter anything! Not even a chicken can be killed just to fill one's belly! The spilling of blood is always a serious thing, and cannot be undertaken lightheartedly. Only Christians slaughter. A so-called "pagan" can only sacrifice. The author is equally wrong in his interpretation of Shonponna. A patient stricken by smallpox is told by the priest "Confess your sins, what have you done to incur the displeasure of Shonponna?" The word "sin" is singularly inappropriate here! Besides the author does not realise that the stricken patient is being honoured for his disease. He carries the God in him. And he is also believed to divert other misfortune from the community. How little the author knows about the Yoruba *orisha* can be seen from the fact, that while his book is literally studded with Christian songs and hymns, there is not a single praise name of Shango; not a single song for Shonponna quoted.

We hear nothing at all about the complex relationship of the Yoruba gods to morality; and the role of the cult in integrating the human personality is completely ignored. One suspects that all the author knows about Yoruba religion are the wild denunciations that were pronounced from the pulpit of his village church when he was a little boy.

One might be more willing to forgive the author for misrepresenting Yoruba religion, if he had given us at least an impressive picture of Christianity. But the Christianity preached by Mr. Aluko's heroes is of a rather objectionable kind. The chief argument against "heathenism" is this: "Why follow a god who has no power to save you from the scourge of small-pox?" It is unfortunately true that many missionaries use such *rational* arguments against Yoruba religion; do they not realise that this is an argument against *any* religion, including Christianity?

The vision of the new life given by the prophet at the end of the book is particularly objectionable:

"I see people casting their idols into the flames..... and turn their backs against their sordid past." (sic!)

"I see the pupils teach their parents what Teacher teaches them at school — that guineaworm comes of bad water and tapeworm of bad meat, that dirt is the great enemy in the home and that cleanliness is of God and is second to Godliness."

In this blasphemous statement the gospel has been confused with hygiene and the prophet is not a prophet of Christ but a prophet of disinfection!

Unfortunately the language of the novel has little to recommend it. It is full of cliches: like "to drink from the fountain of knowledge'. Often the language is ridiculously incongruous. The wrapper of a Yoruba woman is described as a "sarong". The great God of thunder is addressed as "Shango m'Lord". Sometimes the language becomes downright ridiculous. The following passage is the beginning of a fairy tale, told by an illiterate Yoruba girl in Chapter 2. (The italics are mine):

"Nikun was the most beautiful *damsel* on earth. Her hair was of black *silk;* her teeth were as white as *snow* and looked like *pearls.*"

In the whole book there is only one character that sticks in the mind. That is Royasin, the village schoolmaster, who is disgraced and dismissed and sets himself up as a letter writer. Royasin who renames himself Royanson in his new profession is a full blooded character, drawn with a kind of humorous indulgence. His stilted language is beautifully imitated by the author. This character indicates that there is a lot more to Mr. Aluko than this present novel indicates. One can look forward to better work from this author. But this time he set out to write a

novel about the conflict of cultures in an African village; but instead of a novel his book has become an harangue that ends with a sermon.

Ulli Beier

I WAS A SAVAGE by Prince Modupe
Museum Press, London, 1958

The title of this book is meant to be ironical. The author, describing his childhood in Guinée, tries to show that life in the Sousou community does in fact make sense, and that it is anything but savage. He claims to be the son of a Yoruba trader and a Sousou princess.

The book describes his childhood, life in the Sousou family, marriage, religious ceremonies, initiation schools, the coming of the missionaries, the author's experiences in a mission school and finally his leaving for America. One thinks immediately of Camara Laye's "The Dark Child", which is also the description of a childhood in Guinée. But the difference in the two books is immense. Camara Laye's book is delightful, not because he gives us a lot of anthropological information, but because it abounds in vividly remembered detail. Camara Laye does not pretend to "understand" all the things he remembers. He makes no attempt to analyse some of the stranger things he remembers. But he is able to recreate a number of people and incidents for us. His father smelting gold, his mother beating a snake to pulp, his own fear on the eve of the initiation school — these things are quite unforgettable. In "I was a Savage" on the other hand no incident and character really comes to life. The author "knows" about the things he writes about, but he does not "see" them. Sometimes his analysis of a religious ceremony is interesting and convincing:

> Deeply felt silences may be said to be the core of our Kofon Religion. During these times, the nature within ourselves found unity with the nature of earth. This is not "closeness to nature" but rather an immersion in the common nature which pervades all life — plants, animal, human.

But nothing in this book seems to be told from personal experience, everything is based on a knowledge of facts. The author wrote this after thirty six years in America. He was away for too long to be able to conjure up the vision of his home. The result is a book that could have been written by a European anthropologist making up a "typical" story of a Sousou youth. This book could have been compiled even without first hand knowledge of the Sousou people, merely from book knowledge. If this book was really written by an African (which seems doubtful) he must have supplemented his weak memory with knowledge gained from books. Just listen to this:

> "Since I cannot begin to relate the marvellous things which I saw our medicine men achieve (that would be an entire book in itself), I will mention only one, I have chosen it, not because it is greater than any of the other discoveries, *but because it is well documented in the writings of several white doctors who have lived in Africa.*"
> (italics are mine)

In spite of all this the book is quite acceptable and often interesting up to the point where the author describes the coming of the first missionaries. This chapter seems to be invented from beginning to end! I sympathise with the author's disapproval of missionary techniques, but I find it difficult to believe that the missionaries converted his native village by making everybody drunk on whisky. He further wants us to believe that the people of his village had never seen any white being before:

> "There were a few other white or nearly white things in our lives — cotton, white chicken, white cola, grubs in rotten stumps, white ants . . . but a white human was beyond simple imagining."

This is an incredible statement, because albinos are so very common in West Africa, that the author must have seen many humans who were much whiter than the missionaries. We are furthermore supposed to believe that the author mistook the blond hair of the missionary's daughter for real gold ("she must have been immensely wealthy to have goldstuff for hair") and that he scooped up a bit of the missionaries' spittle and swallowed it in order to gain some of his power!

It is significant for this book that where the author tries to give a description of remembered incidents (as above) it is extremely poor and sometimes completely incredible. But when he gives a reasoned and considered opinion, that is not necessarily based on personal experience, he is quite intelligent.

It is impossible to accept Prince Modupe's description of the arrival of the missionaries, but there is much sense in many of the things he says about missionaries later. For example

> "Why was every good act held to be exclusively Christian even when it had a counterpart in tribal life? All tribal things were denounced as bad —"the bad old ways.". Confusion sat on me. If the teacher had said, "A Christian treats all men, everywhere, as though they were members of his own tribe," that would have made clear sense.

I would have gained some concept of the Christian ideal.

Parts of this book could have been turned into an excellent article but as a biographical sketch of the author's childhood it is a failure.

U.B.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT: compiled and edited by Peggy Rutherfoord Faith Press, London & Drum Publications, Johannesburg. 18s.

It is a disturbing commentary on our aesthetics that a great many people still come to our continent with either an exaggerated sense of mission or an excessive love of the exotic for its own sake. *Darkness and Light* is a victim of the latter.

The thing that strikes the reader most in this anthology of African writing is the volume of antiques that have crowded out a good deal of creative literature which might have represented the multi-coloured tapestry that is our continent. Indeed Mrs. Peggy Rutherfoord, the compiler, makes us suspect that she supplies so much legend, myth and ancient African wisdom — good in themselves — as an apology for the all too little creative stuff she exhibits. But not even her rhapsodies about African storytelling which preface the anthology can conceal the paucity of the writing.

The prose and verse here represent South, Central, East and West African writers. Perhaps if the compiler had arranged her material not according to geographical divisions from which it came, but according to content or tone or intention or an aggregate of these, she would have had something better to offer. Such critical sifting would have got rid of a good deal of the rhetoric and versification which we find. She would have brought down to a minimum the statuesque pieces — to only that quantity which helps us to appreciate the bearings (if any) of tradition on our creative writing.

As it is, we find ourselves pleasurably jolted by such imagery as, "The gate of polished reed closes behind them, / And the west is let in" — from a Central African poem by James D. Rubadri about the explorer Stanley's reception. We are kept buoyed up by the Madagassy, Jacques Rabemananjara; by David Diop's lament,

> 'My women crushed their painted mouths
> On the thin hard lips of the steel-eyed conquerors
> And my children quit their peaceful nakedness
> Donning the uniform of iron and bloodshed".

We are delightfully entertained by the Guinean Camara Laye's light hearted short story of the stolen jacket; by the South African William Modisane's satire about the beggar, and by Abioseh Nicol's ably-handled character sketch, *The Devil at Yolahun Bridge*. And then we feel terribly let down by such prose as the following, from a piece by Oscar Ribas:

> "Like glow-worms in the fastness of night doubt stabbed the fog of sadness. Alas, who knows whether they will come back? How many mothers will be bereft of their sons, how many wives without their husbands? How much joy, how much sorrow, will the separation bring? Will they be happy in those lands of fever? Will they find work there, riches and dignity? God would surely help them in their desires? Another siren is heard. The air weeps; love weeps within the heart. Handkerchiefs flutter more anxiously still, waving 'Farewell! Farewell!' Now, those who remain hold council with themselves. Grief is swallowed into the deep distance".

The sentimentality and pretentiousness in this piece make for its bad tone. There is too much of this kind of prose chaff and space is wasted by the inclusion of sheer folk-like versification, e.g. *"The Water Seeker:*

> "She descends
> with clumsy care,
> catching
> time and again
> with one hand
> one the aloe leaves
> smooth and pointed,
> with the other
> she holds the earthern pitcher....."

What a pity to represent Léopold Sédar Senghor by the Congo poem. Of course, phrases like "queen of tamed Africa" that have come to characterise the cinema handbill cannot escape the compiler who looks for the exotic — in the derogatory sense of the term.

There is a good deal of better writing from South Africa — some dating as far back as 1880 — than Can Temba's magazine potboiler with its theatrical characters. There is simply no point in including Francis Oluka's sketch, *The Return of the Soldier:* it says nothing.

It is regrettable that Mrs. Rutherfoord traversed so many miles of African soil, collected, as she tells us, much more material than she cared to use, only to bring us so many echoes and such few genuine voices, so much lumber and so few evergreens.

Ezekiel Mphahlele.

"O PAYS MON BEAU PEUPLE"
by Sembene Ousmane (Amiot Dumont, Paris)

The novel in French West Africa has often been used as an instrument against colonialism. The great Cameroonian writers Oyono and Beti have tried to explode the myth of "France Outre Mère" in their books, but none has shown as violent hatred of the white man as Sembene Ousmane. This book is about an African who has served in the French army during the great war and returns to his home in Senegal with a white wife. The book sets out to describe the difficultes the hero encounters with his own people, who object to his European wife and look with suspicion on the new way of life he is trying to introduce. It also attempts to show the conflict between the hero Faye, and the white rulers of the country, who think that he is undermining their position of prestige by living with a white woman. Faye himself is described as a rather Europeanised character:

> In many ways Faye had adopted the way of thinking and the reactions of white people, while his innermost being had preserved the heritage of his people. During the years he had stayed in Europe, he had seen and learned much. Many changes had taken place in him and he had even arrived at a point where he could look critically at his own race.

Whatever the author means by saying that he preserved the heritage of his people in his innermost being, is difficult to say. For Sembene Ousmane does not show us much in his hero that is African. He has pride in being an African, but his way of thinking is completely European. He returns from Europe with ideas of self-help, and a kind of pioneering spirit. Although he comes from a fisher-man's family he starts a kind of model farm, to set an example to his country men and he gathers around him the young people of the area with whom he discusses progressive ideas.

His family look with suspicion on his activities, particularly his father who is a Moslem preacher and resents the fact that his son avoids the mosque. He is bitterly opposed to the European wife of Faye.

> Tell me, how are you going to live here? Are you going to eat corn? Will your wife carry water? Will she pound millet or will you have to do it yourself? In these coming days you will not be able to eat at our table, because we only have one type of food and one bowl for all. If she does not despise us too much, do you think she might dip her white hand into our bowl . . .

The conflict with the family is convincingly described by the author. The lack of understanding between father and son, the emotional opposition of the mother, whose sympathy is finally won when she learns that the white woman is going to bear a child to her son, these are among the best things in the book. There are some interesting glimpses we catch of the traditional life in the authors home, although clearly he has no sympathy at all with the past and everything that represents it. Islam is to him just an obstacle to progress and when he describes a local chief, the representative of the old way of life, his hatred and contempt are unconcealed:

> The king was a man who could only live sitting down. His loins were hidden in a mass of flesh that was oozing out in all directions. To make things worse his neck was hidden between a tiny head and an enormous belly, that was disfigured by navel rupture. When Oumar saw him, he asked himself whether this man was capable of thinking at all. He squatted on a clumsily carved stool. A loincloth that covered his nakedness, partly disappeared in the folds of his body.

The author is even less convincing in his handling of the conflict between Faye and the white people in the colony. We can understand the hero's pride only too well. What he resents most, is the fact that the European only appreciates an African when he imitates the European:

> Sometimes they ask you: 'Where did you learn your French? How is it that you speak it so well?' He believes immediately that it is the civilization of the white man that has made you a useful person; only because of it you are able to react, to judge, even to feel — and so they regard you as their creation.

It is also clear that Faye, having a white wife, will suffer more from the hostility of colonialists than other people. In addition they begin to fear him, because he becomes a more and more important man in the local community and the farmers begin to look on him as their leader. Already they begin to sell their crops to him, rather than to the big European trading houses and Faye seems to dream of some large co-operative movement that will break the foreign trade monopolies.

One might well believe that the foreign traders would attempt to wreck Faye financially, but the author resolves the conflict between the progressive African and the Europeans who try to keep him down into a Wild West type of violence. In the very opening scene of the novel super-man Faye punches a white man into submission and on the next occasion he successfully fights the entire crew of a ship single handed!

His sense of justice is so strong, that he uses his fists whenever he sees injustice or exploitation, and needless to say, he always floors his opponent. The white victims of his fury try to retaliate at first by attempting to violate his wife. Finally they manage to hire some Africans who attack Faye in the night and kill him.

The improbability of all these scenes make it impossible for us to accept Faye as a martyr. The author thinks of Faye as a tragic hero. Although he is killed in the end, his spirit lingers on and the work he began is continued by his people. Unfortunately this ending falls rather flat. One feels that the conflict between Faye and the colonialists would have taken a rather more subtle form — which does mean that it would have been less dangerous.

This cannot be called a successful novel, taken all in all. But there is much in it that is worth our attention and the author shows ability and promise. We look forward to see his future, more balanced work.

U.B.

MUNTU by Janheinz Jahn

Eugen Diederichs 1958.

There are those who believe that the impact of Western technology will completely destroy all African cultures and that the final result will be a new Africa that is completely assimilated to European life and have lost its identity completely. Mr. Jahn in this study of neo-African culture suggests on the other hand, that the result of the culture conflict will be a third culture, a neo-African culture, that derives equally from European thinking and from traditional African philosophy. He sees the beginnings of such a culture in the writings of the great African and Afro-American writers like Senghor and Césaire, all of whom still embody certain elements of traditional African culture. Mr. Jahn asserts that African culture did in fact form a *unity* with certain distinct common traits. He sets out to prove this, by analysing Alexis Kagame's famous study of Bantou philosophy and then trying to show that many of Kagame's findings in Ruanda Urundu could equally be applied in other parts of Africa. He investigates traditional African religion, music, art and literature in order to find the common denominator and then goes on to show to what extent these basic elements helped to create what he defines as neo-African culture. This book will find few friends among anthropologists and ethnographers, who have been stressing more and more the differences between individual cultures, rather than their common elements. They feel on the whole, that there is such a rich variety of patterns in African communities that only a highly specialised study can hope to penetrate into the spirit of these cultures. Since Frobenius, the great theories that try to build everything into one big imposing picture have become suspect. Yet here such an attempt has been made again, once again by a German writer, and the result is certainly intriguing. Undoubtedly a book that is trying to comprehend the entirety of African cultural manifestations on two continents is bound to contain errors in details, and is bound to distort facts in order to fit them into the general pattern of the theory. On the other hand such a study, in what might be called "the grand manner" opens up many new vistas, that would remain closed to the anthropologist who loses himself in a lot of detail. And it cannot be denied that Mr. Jahn's juxtaposition of the most heterogeneous African cultures, and their classification and definition with the help of Bantu terminology derived from Kagame, shows up surprising relationships and similarities. His method sheds a great deal of light on the vast number of monographs and detailed studies that exist in the field of African studies.

More important than to the Africanist and anthropologist is this book to the young African nationalist. For the last fifteen years or so we have been talking a lot about the African personality, without being very sure what we mean by it. At the basis of it was a rejection of the increasing tendency to assimilate European culture, and a desire to discover African values and African culture — whatever they might be. But those of us who believed that some of our traditions should be preserved as a kind of antedote to the overwhelming influx of European culture were often denounced as "tribalists" by our brothers.

Now here Mr. Jahn in his book "Muntu" offers a solution: a neo-African culture which is inspired by the *common* elements in our traditions.

There is no doubt that this is an extremely controversial book and that many of Mr. Jahn's ideas and theories are open to attack. The experts will tear it to pieces, but it will remain an important pioneering work.

Omidiji Aragbalu.

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A literary journal in Yoruba.

Olokun contains Yoruba short stories, poems, folk lore articles and criticism.

It is the first journal of its kind.

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COVER DESIGN

by Susanne Wenger after a Senufo mask.

MANUSCRIPTS

the editors will be pleased to consider poetry, prose fiction and criticism for publication in Black Orpheus. Manuscripts can be sent to: Ulli Beier, P.O.B. 68, OSHOGBO, NIGERIA or Janheinz Jahn, Hospitalstrasse 8, OFFENBACH, Main, GERMANY.

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